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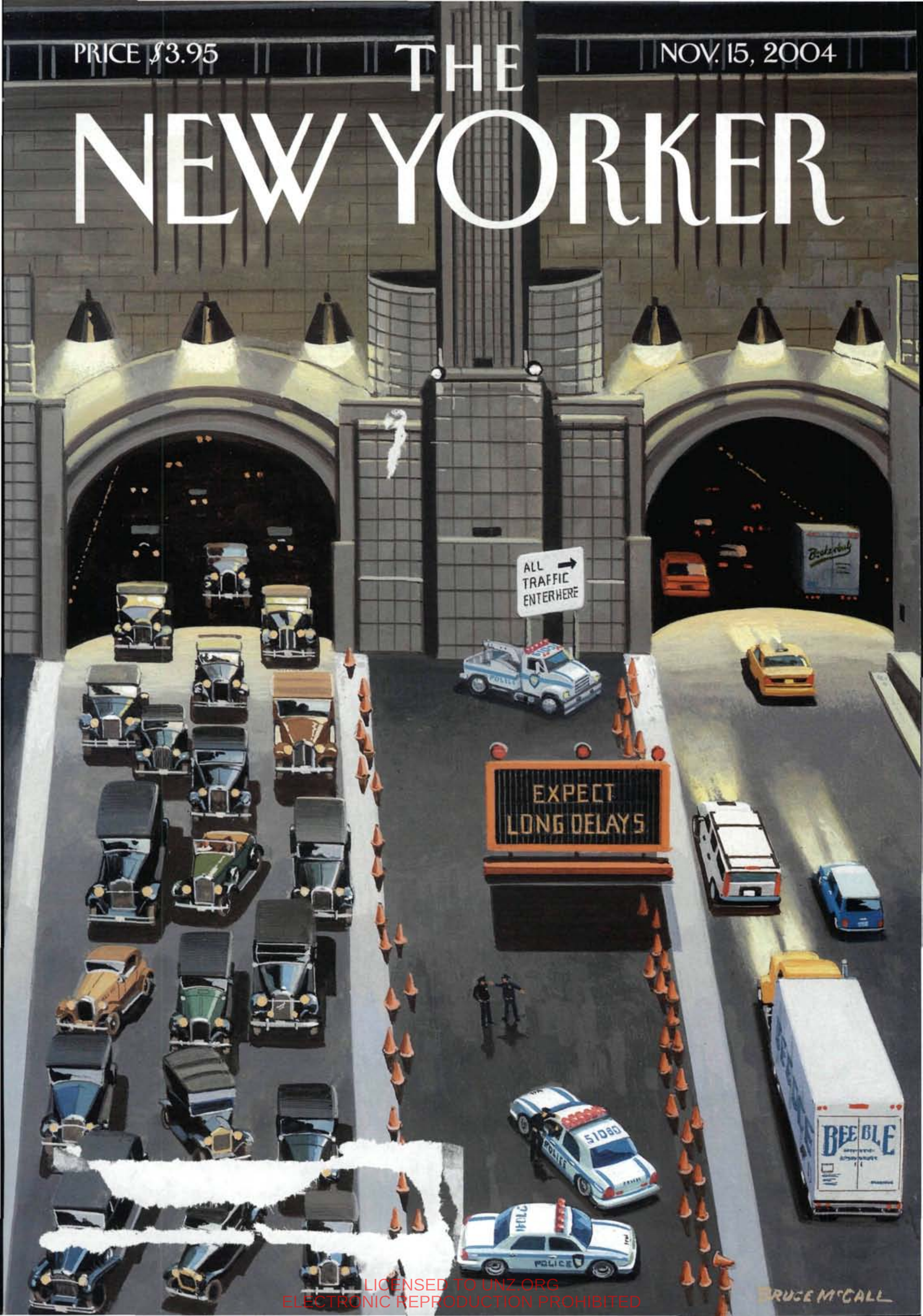
NOV. 15, 2004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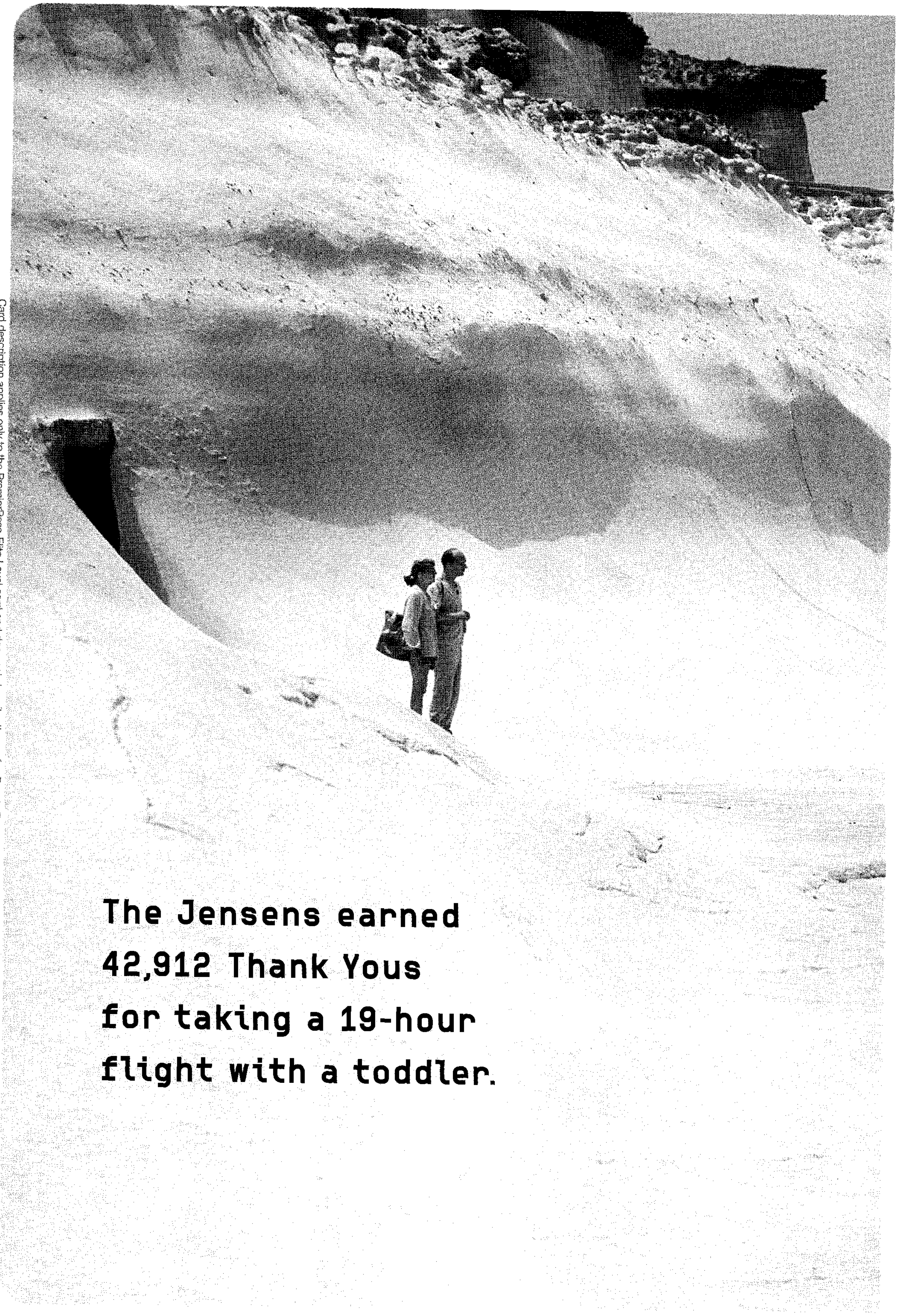
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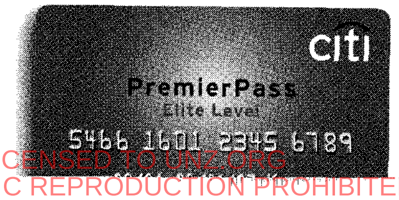

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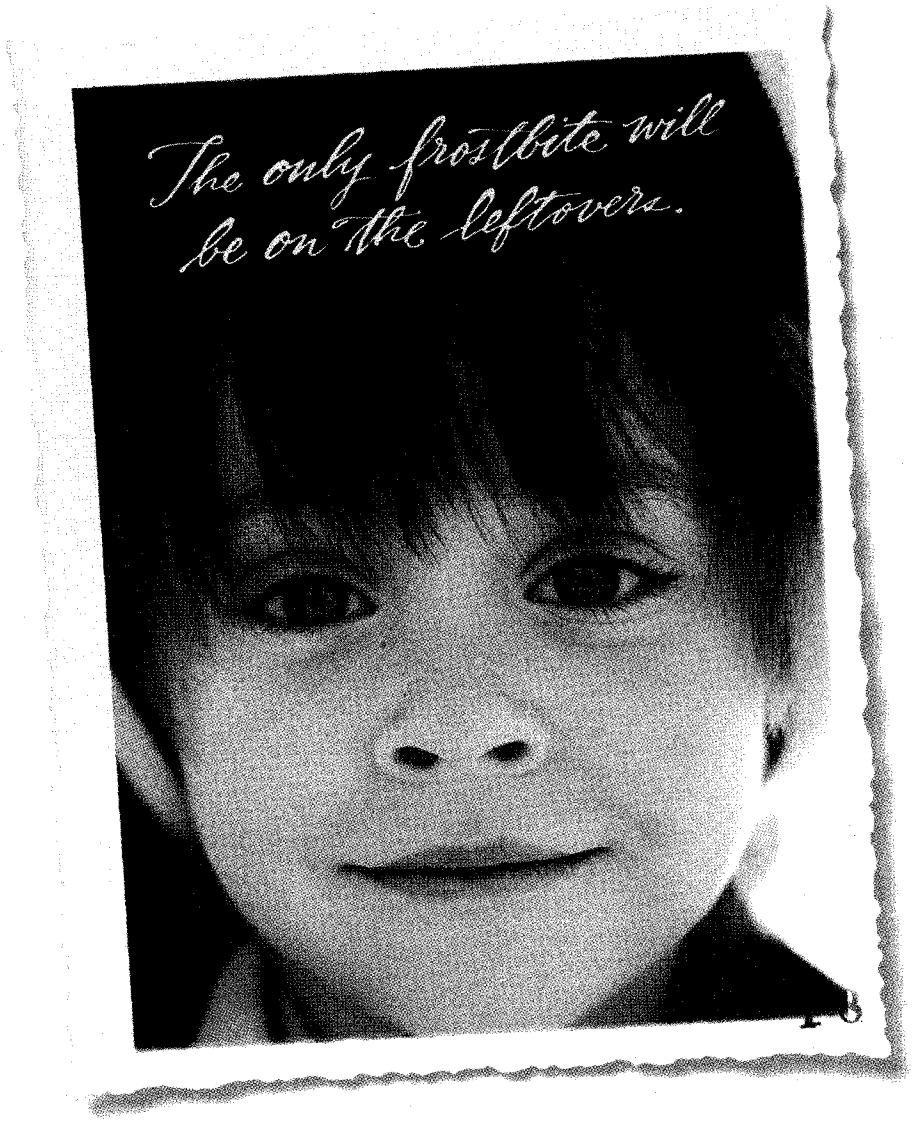

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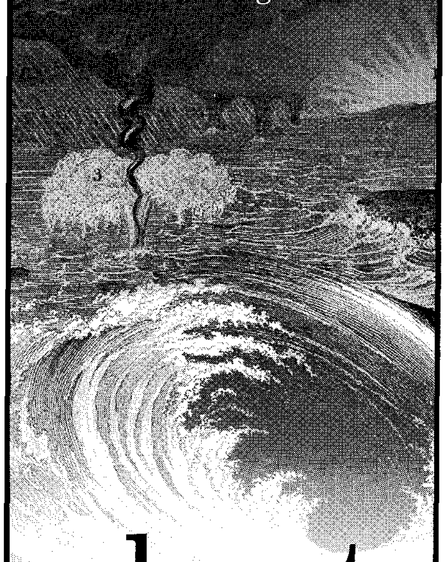

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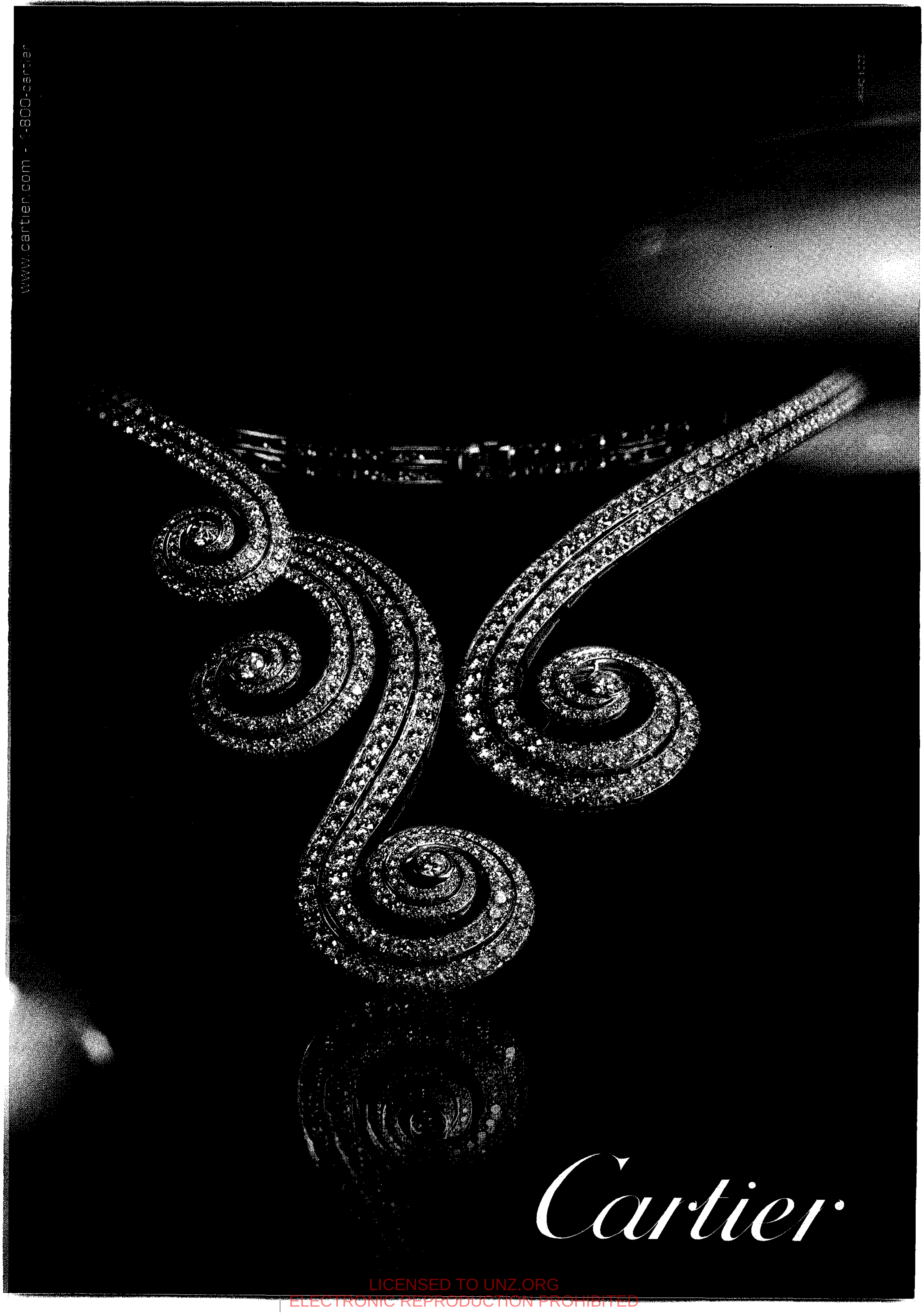
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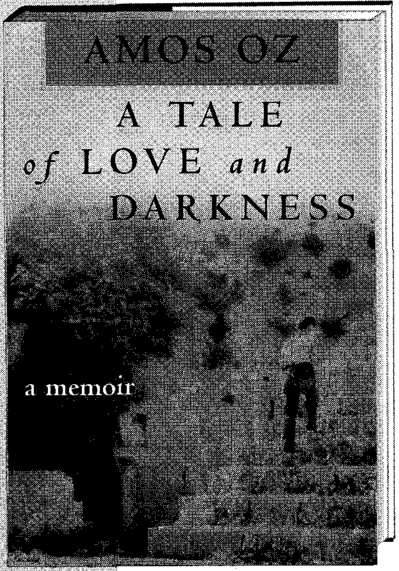

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CONTRIBUTORS

John McPhee ("Tight-Assed River," p. 80) is the author of twenty-six books, including "Annals of the Former World," for which he received a Pulitzer Prize, and "The Founding Fish."

Hendrik Hertzberg (Comment, p. 33) is a senior editor and a staff writer. His book "Politics: Observations & Arguments, 1966-2004" came out in July.

Dana Goodyear (The Talk of the Town, p. 38) is an editor at the magazine. Her first collection of poems, "Honey and Junk," is due out next spring.

Caitlin Flanagan ("Bringing Up Baby," p. 46) is working on a book about modern motherhood.

Adam Gopnik ("The End of the World," p. 64) is a staff writer and the author of "Paris to the Moon."

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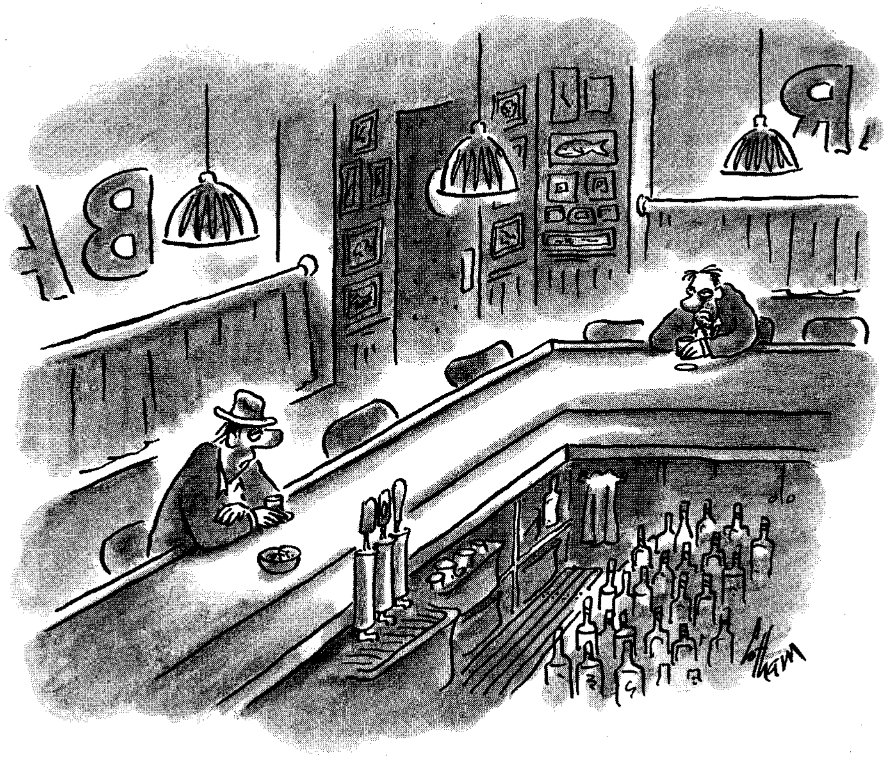
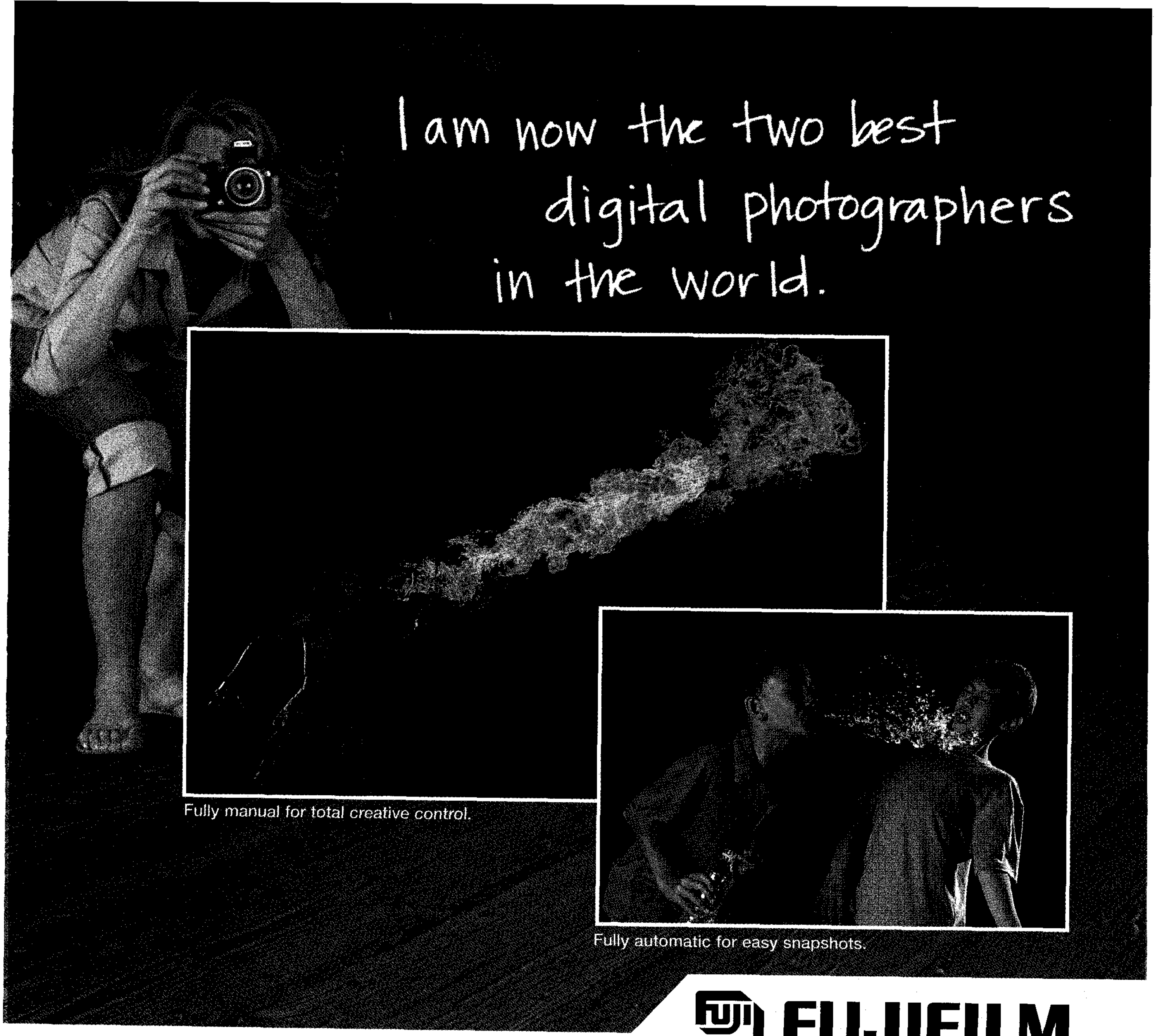
Paul Goldberger (The Sky Line, p. 110), the magazine's architecture critic, is the dean of the Parsons School of Design and the author of "Up from Zero."

Nancy Franklin (On Television, p. 114) writes a regular column on television.

Lee Lorenz (The Back Page, p. 118) is a former art editor of *The New Yorker*. His cartoons have appeared in the magazine since 1958. ◆



"The voters sent me a message I didn't approve of."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THE MAIL

CHOOSING SIDES

I am an evangelical Christian who is perplexed by the strong support that President George W. Bush has received from God-fearing Christians (Comment, by the Editors, November 1st). I wholeheartedly agree with the criticisms of Bush in your endorsement of Senator John Kerry, and also with the positive assessment of Kerry's character. I voted for Kerry not just because he is not Bush. I voted for him because he has demonstrated steadfastness while under attack (from flip-flop charges and Swift Boat ads), a mastery of facts, and a willingness to change course when evidence proves that he's headed in the wrong direction. While Kerry has his faults (we all do), I would rather take my chances with him than continue with this Administration on its path to destruction. Likable? Who cares? Charisma is nice, but we need common sense and wisdom.

Josephine Hayes
Sicklerville, N.J.

Your ringing endorsement of Kerry proves that you are out of touch with mainstream America. This election was about the war on terror, period. My vote on November 2nd was not only an expression of support for Bush and his fight against terrorism but, I hope, a message to media outlets such as yours that abuse their responsibility to the American public by pushing an agenda and trying to divide us.

Michael Spencer
Baltimore, Md.

As a subscriber for nearly forty years, I was greatly disappointed by your endorsement of Kerry. One of the joys of reading *The New Yorker* has been the seemingly balanced approach it has taken to politics. The stories often have a liberal taint, yet it never approached the level in other news sources. But this put it in the same category as those which start with an agenda and drive the story in that direction. This is not about your right to speak and endorse a candidate or an idea: just because you can doesn't mean you should. You have, with just a few paragraphs, destroyed an almost eighty-year legacy.

R. A. Williams
New York City

I commend the editors for breaking with tradition to endorse a candidate. With the internal freedom of the nation at stake, it would be wrong to remain distanced. No less than at the founding of the nation, this is a time to show republican (with a small "r") colors no matter which side of the political house any of us occupy. Thank you for the courage of your convictions and their public expression.

The Reverend Robert Stuart
Amagansett, N.Y.

Your endorsement mentioned five thousand U.S. resident foreign nationals detained and five hundred deported since 9/11. Unfortunately, these numbers minimize the problem. Fourteen thousand mostly Muslim men, all of whom thought they had legal status, have been subject to deportation proceedings through the Special Registration program alone. There are many more. As relief coördinator for the Islamic Circle of North America, I have assisted six hundred and fifty detainees for three stressful years and have seen how families and communities have been traumatized. We need immigration policies that work, not politicization and pressure on an already dysfunctional bureaucracy.

Adem Carroll
Jamaica, N.Y.

CORRECTION: A quotation from Amos Oz in "The Spirit Level," in the November 8th issue, should have read, "There was one-hundred-per-cent ethnic cleansing of"—not "by"—"the Jews in the West Bank and Gaza in 1948."

•

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to themail@newyorker.com. They can also be faxed to 212-286-5047. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. All letters become the property of The New Yorker and will not be returned; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.

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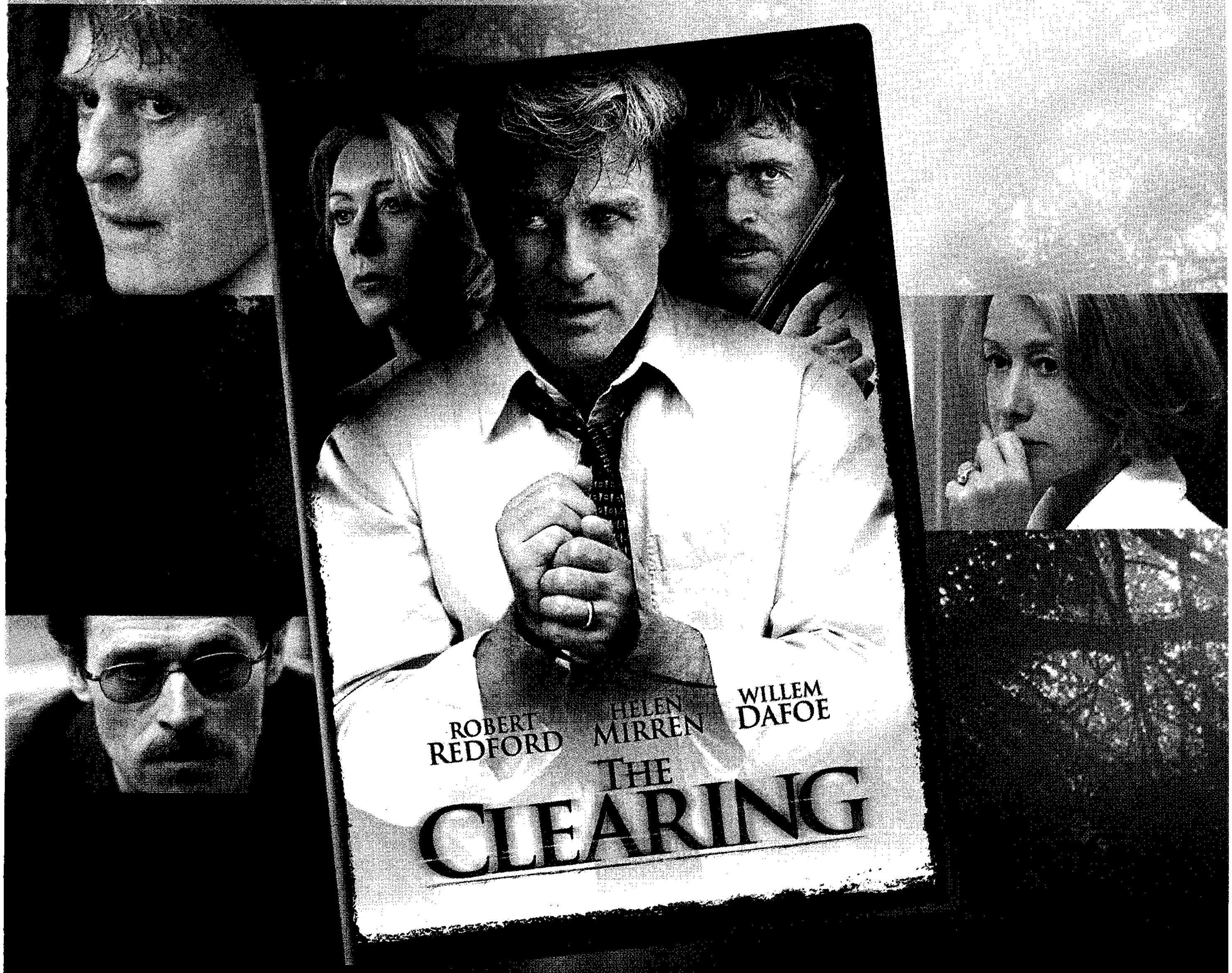
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—— *Lou Lumenick, NEW YORK POST*

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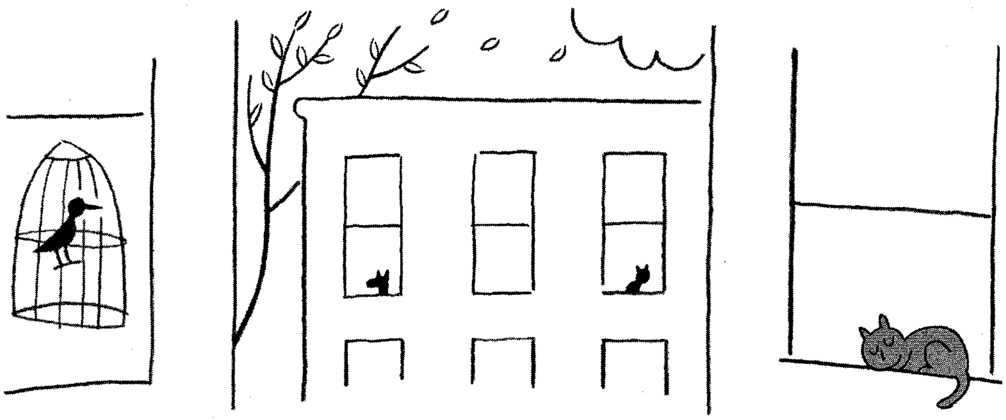

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For expanded events listings, please visit www.newyorker.com/goingson.

THIS WEEK

MEXICAN RADIO

Plastilina Mosh is Alejandro Rosso and Juan (Jonaz) González, friends from Monterrey, Mexico, who specialize in internationally flavored electronic rock. Six years ago, the eclectic sound of their United States début, "Aquamosh," earned them comparisons to Beck. Two albums later, they turn out to be more like their country's answer to the Beastie Boys—their latest release, "Hola Chicuelos," is full of sleazy disco funk and sophomoric humor.

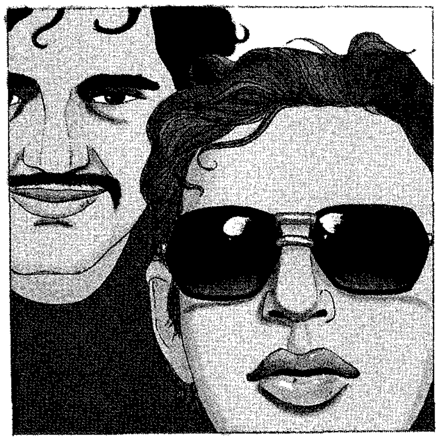
After failing to win a Latin Grammy Award, the pair told a Los Angeles radio station that they would put a sticker on the album declaring themselves "Grammy Losers." They make a rare New York appearance at Joe's Pub on Nov. 15. (See Night Life.)

SEND IN THE CLONES

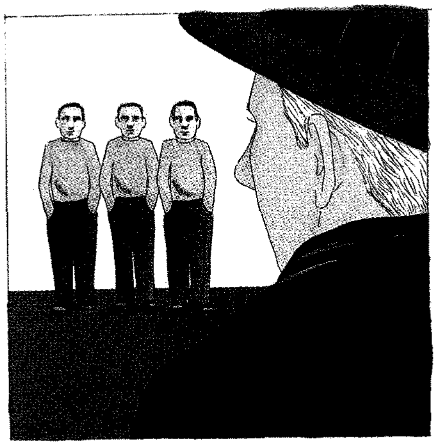
The conceptually cagey British playwright Caryl Churchill last came to town with "Far Away," a dark, futurist fable about a totalitarian society. Now she returns with "A Number," which concerns the moral repercussions of human cloning and which stars Sam Shepard, in his first stage role in three decades. Directed by James Macdonald. Previews begin Nov. 16. Opens Nov. 21. (New York Theatre Workshop; see Theatre.)

A FINE LINE

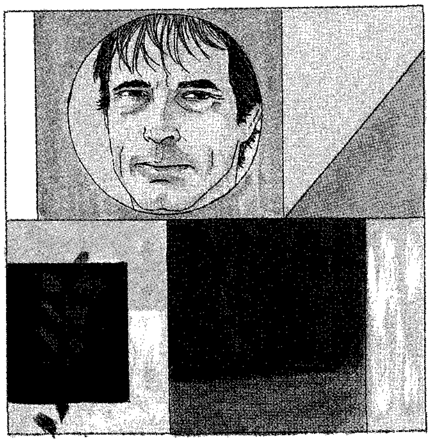
In "Richard Tuttle: It's a Room for 3 People," at the Drawing Center, the New Jersey-born artist applies the things he's always been known for—a minimalist sensibility and a love of strange materials—to drawing. This results in a melding of forms: the five suites of drawings shown here are paired with sculptures, and are often built up to three dimensions with Styrofoam, wood, sawdust, and fluff. Tuttle's having a big year. This is the first of two shows at the Drawing Center (the second will be a suite of drawings responding to the five here), and a career retrospective of his work goes up at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art on July 2, 2005, before travelling to the Whitney. Through Feb. 26. (See Art.)



The Mexican alt-rock duo Plastilina Mosh, appearing at Joe's Pub.

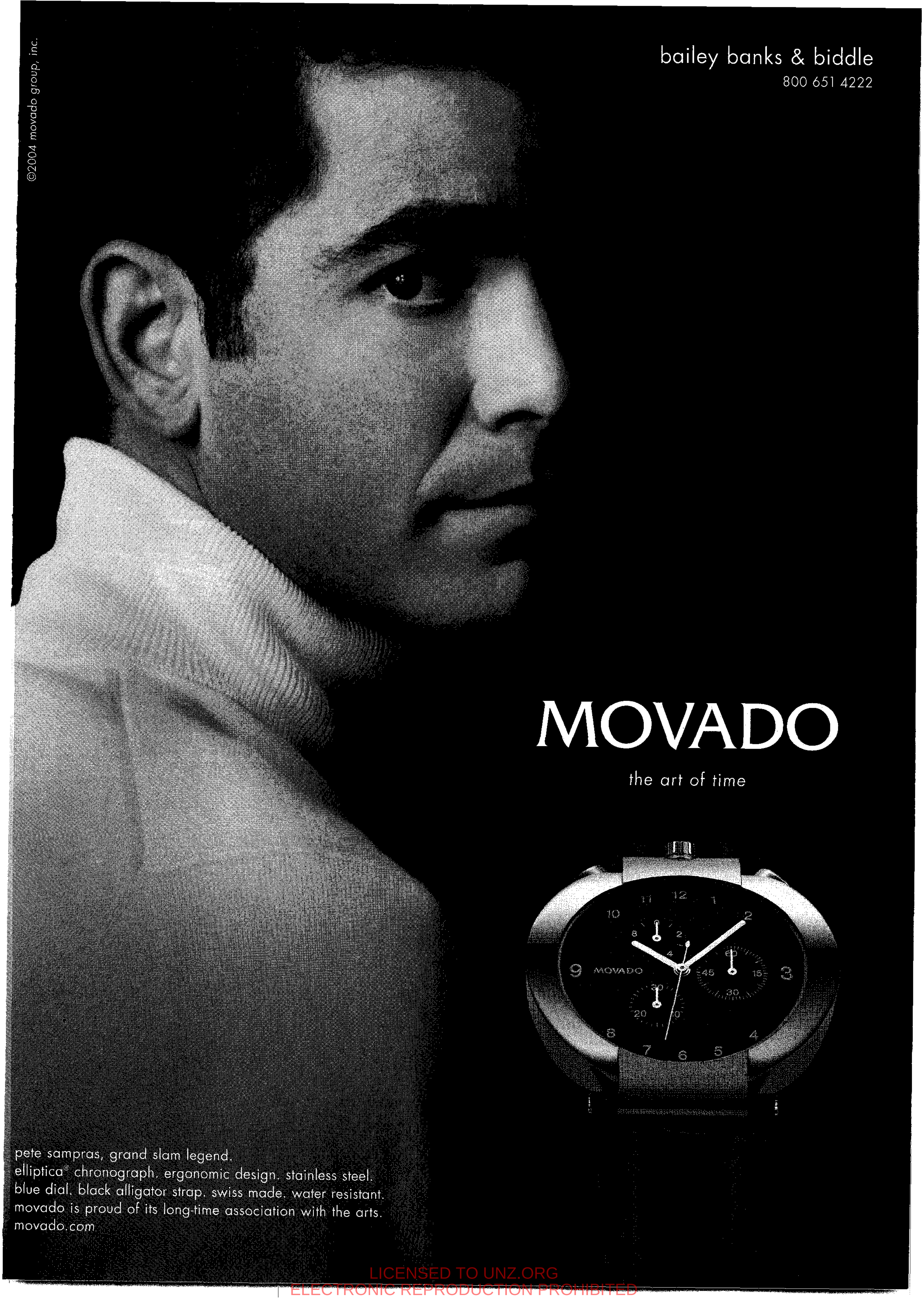


Caryl Churchill's new cloning drama, "A Number," starring Sam Shepard.



LARA TOMLIN

The art work of Richard Tuttle, now on view at the Drawing Center.



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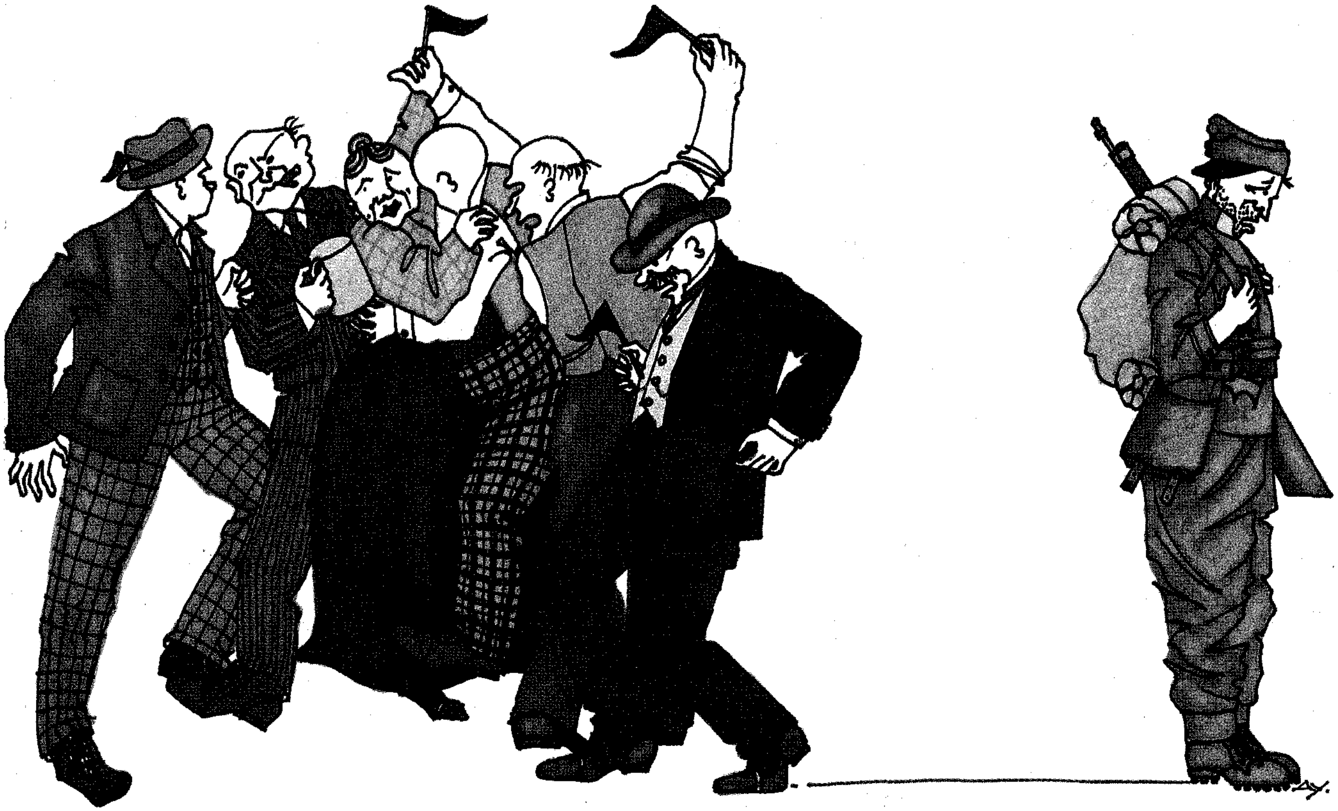
BELLE ÉPOQUE
A new work by Martha Clarke and Charles L. Mee imagines the life of Toulouse-Lautrec (Mark Povinelli) at the Moulin Rouge. Directed by Clarke. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)



Jaroslav Hašek's soldier Švejk—the literary ancestor of Yossarian—is reimagined by Colin Teevan at the Duke on 42nd Street.

ANITA YAVICH

LA CAGE AUX FOLLES
A revival of Jerry Herman and Harvey Fierstein's wacky musical about a gay couple who disguise themselves as man and wife. Gary Beach and Daniel Davis lead the cast. Directed by Jerry Zaks. In previews. (Marquis, Broadway at 46th St. 212-307-4100.)

DAME EDNA: BACK WITH A VENGEANCE!
The vivacious and vicious Australian housewife and talk-show host (a.k.a. Barry Humphries) returns to Broadway with a new show that includes psychic readings of audience members. In previews. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

DEMOCRACY
Michael Frayn's hit London play about Willy Brandt comes to Broadway. James Naughton and Richard Thomas lead the cast. Directed by Michael Blakemore. In previews. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

DOUBT
In a new play by John Patrick Shanley, set in the nineteen-sixties at a Catholic school in the Bronx, a nun (Cherry Jones) worries that a priest (Brían F. O'Byrne) is too close to a male student. Directed by Doug Hughes. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

FIVE BY TENN
Manhattan Theatre Club presents four newly discovered one-act plays by Tennessee Williams, along with "I Can't Imagine Tomorrow," in a production that stars Kathleen Chalfant. Michael Kahn directs. One preview on Nov. 10. Opens Nov. 11 at 8. (131 W. 55th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE GOD OF HELL
In a play by Sam Shepard inspired by the Bush Administration, an evil government official harasses a Midwestern farm couple. Directed by Lou Jacob. In previews. Opens Nov. 16 at 8. (Actors Studio Drama School Theatre, 151 Bank St. 212-279-4200.)

THE GOOD BODY
Eve Ensler follows up "The Vagina Monologues" with a play about women's body-image issues. Directed by Peter Askin. In previews. Opens Nov. 15 at 8. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

'NIGHT, MOTHER
Brenda Blethyn and Edie Falco star in a revival of Marsha Norman's 1983 play about a mother and her suicidal daughter. Directed by Michael Mayer. In previews. Opens Nov. 14 at 8. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

NORA (A DOLL'S HOUSE)
Berlin's Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz presents Thomas Ostermeier's modernized version of the Ibsen play—which includes a surprise finish. Anne Tismer plays Nora. In German, with English surtitles. Nov. 9-13. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100.)

A NUMBER
Caryl Churchill's new play, about human cloning, comes to New York Theatre Workshop (see This Week). Previews begin Nov. 16. (79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

PACIFIC OVERTURES
B. D. Wong stars in the Roundabout's revival of the 1976 Sondheim musical (book by John Weidman) about the impact American culture has had on Japanese society since Commodore Perry landed in Japan in 1853. Directed by Amon Miyamoto. Previews begin Nov. 12. (Studio 54, 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300.)

RISK EVERYTHING
The Polish director Grzegorz Jarzyna brings his company, TR Warszawa, to St. Ann's Warehouse, with its production of George F. Walker's louche urban suspense drama. In Polish, with English supertitles. Nov. 10-21. (38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779.)

A SECONDHAND MEMORY
A new play written and directed by Woody Allen is set in Brooklyn in the nineteen-fifties and stars Dominic Chianese, Beth Fowler, Elizabeth Marvel, and others. In previews. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

700 SUNDAYS
Billy Crystal makes his Broadway début in a play about his life. Written by Crystal, with additional material by Alan Zweibel. Directed by Des McAnuff. Previews begin Nov. 12. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

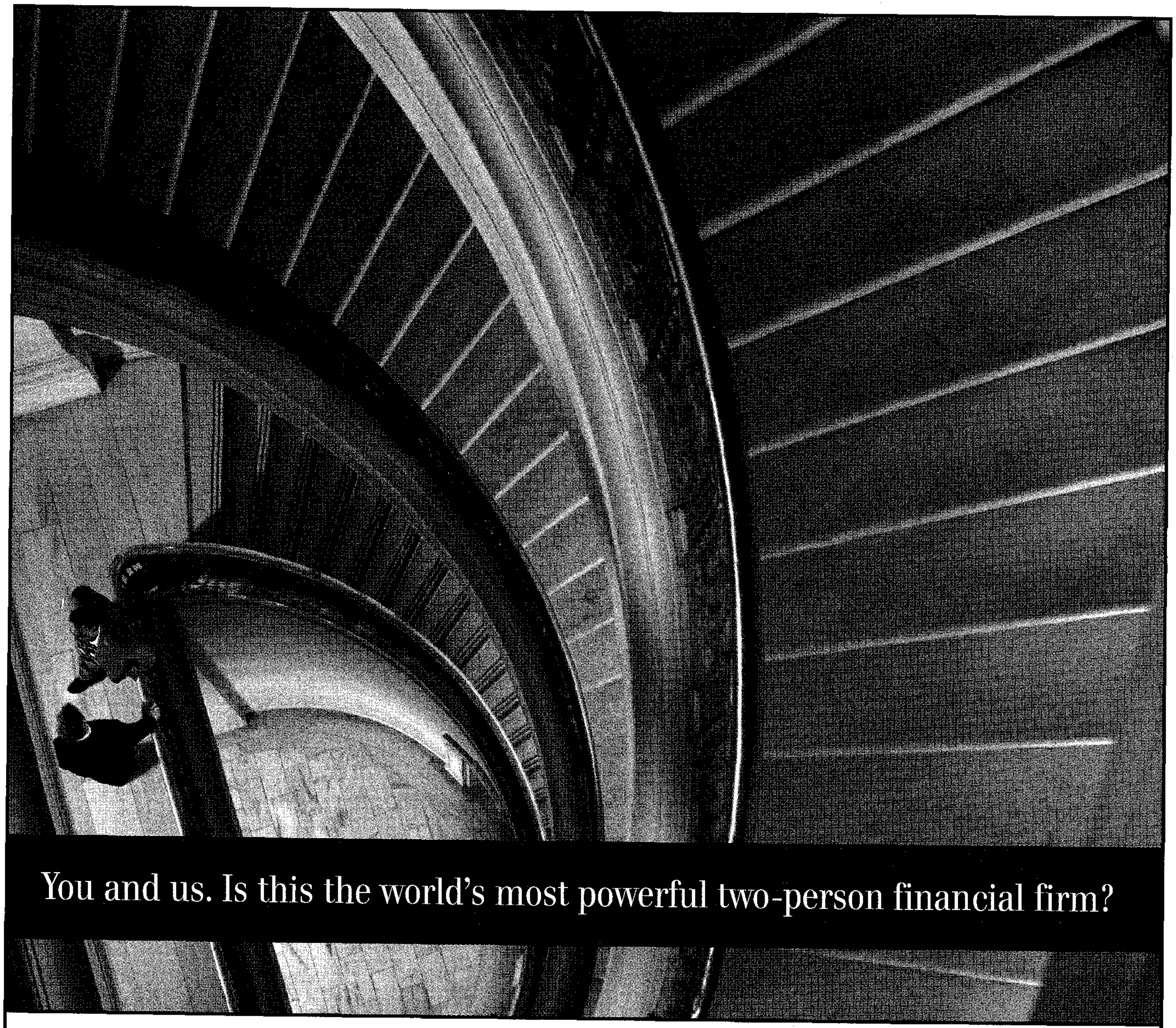
ŠVEJK
Colin Teevan's satire is based on Jaroslav Hašek's 1923 story about a village idiot who fights in the First World War. With original music by Lenny Pickett, the music director of "Saturday Night Live," and lyrics by Teevan. Directed by Dalia Ibelhauptaite. In previews. (Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

WHOOPI, THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY
Whoopi Goldberg returns to Broadway with a new production of the show that launched her career. In previews. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

BROOKLYN: THE MUSICAL
This mishmash of Horatio Alger and "Star Search" tells the improbable tale of a Parisian orphan named Brooklyn who comes to New York (speaking Brooklynese, not French) on a quest for fame and the father she never knew and is welcomed by the city's homeless population. Directed by Jeff Calhoun. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

COMFORT WOMEN
In a play by Chungmi Kim, set in 1994, a young Korean-American woman and her grandmother meet two women who were among the thousands of "comfort women" abducted by the Japanese imperial forces during the Second World War and turned into sex slaves. The witness-bearing script is given life by two powerful performances: by Tina Chen, as a woman who wants to forget everything, and by Jade Wu, as a woman who uses anger and humor to fuel her memory. Directed by Frances Hill. (Urban Stages, 259 W. 30th St. 212-868-4444.)



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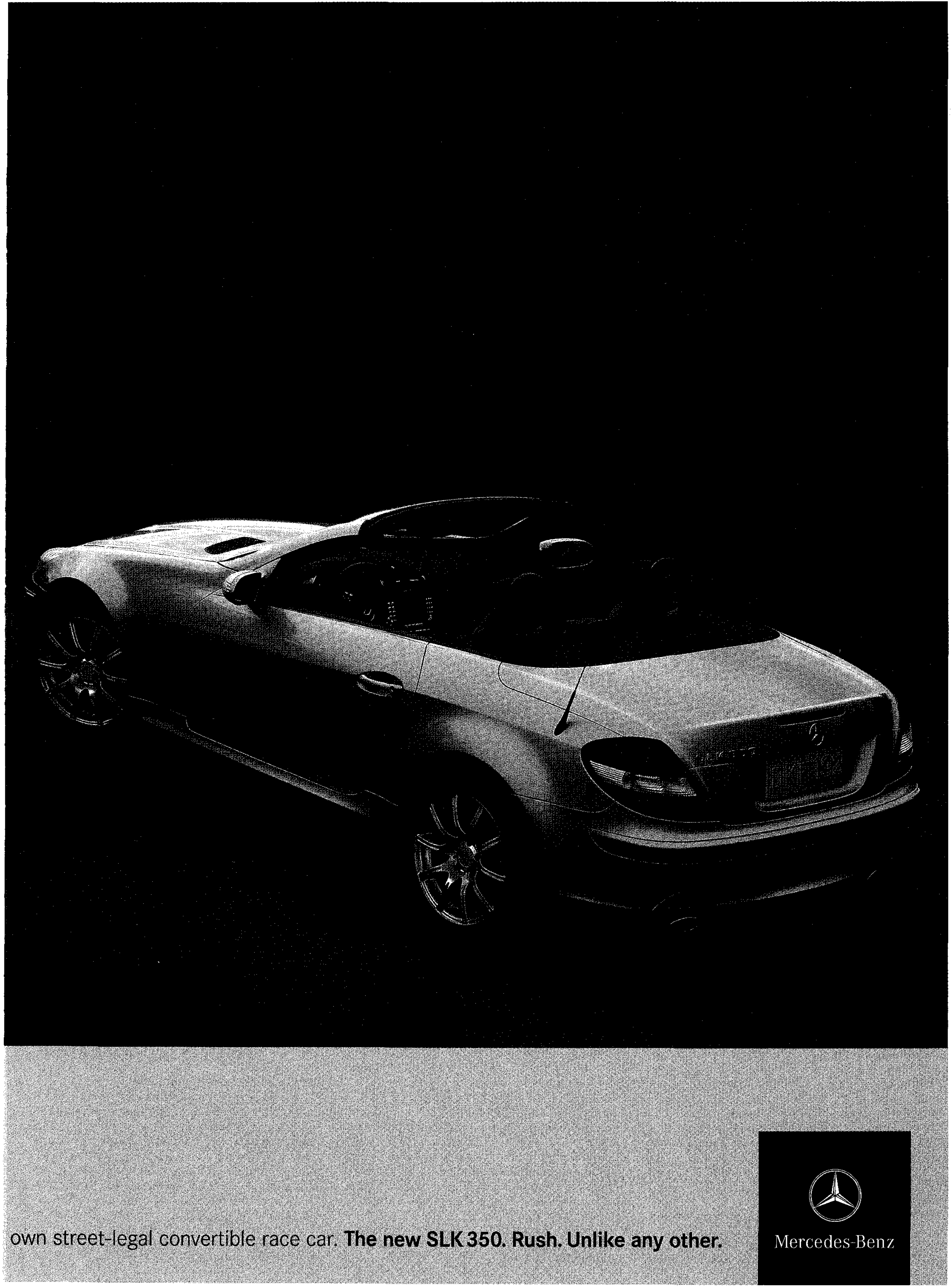

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DANNY AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA
A revival of John Patrick Shanley's 1984 play about a hard-luck couple, played by Adam Rothenberg and Rosemarie DeWitt, who meet in a dive bar in the Bronx. A Second Stage Theatre production, directed by Leigh Silverman. (307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

DIMPHO DI KOPANE
The South African lyric-theatre company—whose name means "combined talents" in Sotho—makes its New York début with four repertory productions. (Synod Hall, Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 212-581-1212.)

EVE-OLUTION
A play by Hilary Illick and Jennifer Krier (based on their experiences) interweaves the stories of two women who are struggling to retain their sense of self while raising a family. This show knows its audience; it has no surprises, but plenty of heart. Directed by Carolyn Cantor. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 212-239-6200.)

THE FOREIGNER
Matthew Broderick and Frances Sternhagen star in the Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of Larry Shue's comedy about an unsociable Brit who goes on vacation in the American South and pretends that he doesn't speak English. Directed by Scott Schwartz. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

At Dark Light, a new club in Chelsea, stained glass and a fake magnolia tree provide the backdrop for late-night mischief.

DIVYA SRINIVASAN

HELL MEETS HENRY HALFWAY
Philadelphia's Pig Iron Theatre Company brings its absurdist physical humor to the Ohio Theatre in a new show, adapted by Adriano Shaplin from Witold Gombrowicz's gothic novel, "Possessed." (66 Wooster St. 212-868-4444.)

9 PARTS OF DESIRE
Heather Raffo's remarkable one-woman show, which bears witness to Iraqi women's political oppression, is an example of how art can remake the world and eloquently name pain. Based on research and dozens of interviews conducted on four continents over eleven years (Raffo portrays nine women in the course of the evening), the play brings news of the psychic life of the brutalized and allows us to think about the unthinkable. Directed by Joanna Settle. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/8/04.) (Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200.)

PONIES
In Mike Batistick's brisk drama—which features two actors from "The Sopranos," Michael Imperioli and John Ventimiglia—a seedy Lower East Side Off-Track Betting center is the most hopeful place in New York. Ventimiglia is superb as Drazen, a hotheaded Croatian émigré who befriends a Nigerian-born livery-cab driver named Ken (Babs Olusanmokun). Imperioli plays an illegal immigrant named Wallace, a minor character who gets major laughs. Directed by Nick Sandow. (Studio Dante, 257 W. 29th St. 212-279-4200. Through Nov. 20.)

PUGILIST SPECIALIST
The Riot Group's psychological drama about four U.S. marines on a tense mission in the Middle East comes to 45 Below. Written by Adriano Shaplen. (45 Bleecker St. 212-352-3101.)

SAILOR'S SONG
LAByrinth Theatre Company presents the première of a seaside romance by John Patrick Shanley, choreographed by Barry McNabb and directed by Chris McGarry. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

TRYING
In a touching, traditional drama by Joanna McClelland Glass, a determined young Canadian secretary (Kati Brazda) with a passion for Wallace Stevens tries to straighten out the paperwork of a crotchety lawmaker, Francis Biddle (Fritz Weaver). Directed by Sandy Shinner. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.)

WONDERFUL TOWN
Brooke Shields has joined the cast of the buoyant, beautifully staged revival of the musical from 1953, about two spirited Ohio sisters' adventures in Greenwich Village. (Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

DANCE

"FOREVER TANGO"
Luis Bravo's evening of Argentine dance features fourteen dancers and an eleven-piece orchestra. The show has returned to the Shubert following a successful run this summer. (225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. Nov. 9, Nov. 11-12, and Nov. 16 at 8; Nov. 10 and Nov. 13 at 2 and 8; and Nov. 14 at 3. Through Nov. 28.)

"FOR THE CHILDREN OF YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND TOMORROW"
Pina Bausch's Tanztheater Wuppertal brings a nostalgic, multilayered work to Brooklyn. On a stage strewn with red blossoms, sand, and water, dancers evoke touchstones of childhood, maturity, and old age. (BAM's Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Nov. 16 at 7:30. Through Nov. 21.)

"RENNIE HARRIS' LEGENDS OF HIP-HOP"
No choreographer has been more successful in expanding the expressive possibilities of hip-hop dance than Rennie Harris. But he's also devoted to his roots. This touring showcase is an offshoot of an annual conference he runs in Philadelphia that calls together the pioneers of hip-hop dance as a kind of high council of authenticity. The lineup includes the West Coast funksters Don Campbell (the creator of locking) and Boogaloo Sam (the creator of popping) and the Rock Steady Crew. DJ Evil Tracy mans the turntables, and Kenny Muhammad serves as a human beat box. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. Nov. 12 at 7, Nov. 13 at 2 and 7, and Nov. 14 at noon and 5. Through Nov. 28.)

DELFOS DANZA CONTEMPORÁNEA
This stylish troupe of skilled and supple dancers from Mazatlán, Mexico, makes its New York début with "Brief Moments," a collection of repertory works. The choreography, by the artistic directors Víctor Manuel Ruiz and Claudia Lavista and the dancer Omar Carrum, tends toward high-intensity flailing, too infrequently relieved by arresting images. Still, the diverse program includes an old-fashioned, introspective solo; a nuanced portrait of a couple's troubled intimacy; and a steamy trio by dancers tricked out as haute-couture vampires. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Nov. 9-12 at 8, Nov. 13 at 2 and 8, and Nov. 14 at 2 and 7:30.)

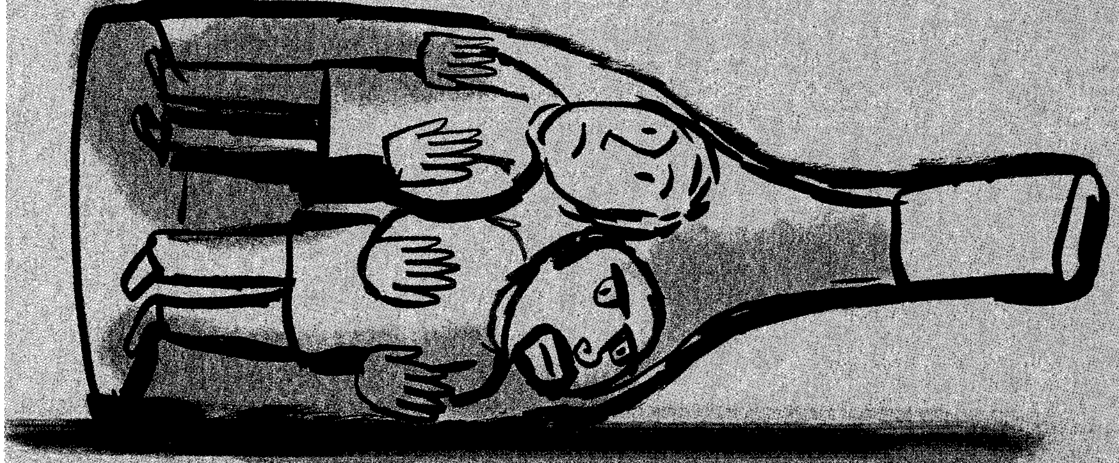
GARTH FAGAN DANCE
In its season at the Joyce, the company unveils a new three-part work for twelve dancers, "----ing," set to Brahms's Quintet for Clarinet and String Quartet in B Minor, Op. 115. The piece shows off the virtuosity of the troupe's newest members, such as Guy Thorne and Annique Roberts, whose focus, strength, and grace give physical expression to the music's emotional intensity. Repertory pieces in the program include "Discipline Is Freedom," "Translation Transition," and "Dance*collage*forromie." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Nov. 16 at 8. Through Nov. 21.)

RISA JAROSLOW & DANCERS
Jaroslow's new evening-length work, "Whole Sky," grew out of two years of community workshops with deaf adults, Upper West Side seniors, and gay and lesbian teens. Jaroslow asked the participants, "What makes you feel whole?" Their answers, in words and movement, are the connecting tissue of a montage of dance, audio excerpts from interviews, and video elements that are projected onto the screenlike skirts of the dancers. Workshop members appear alongside the corps, giving the audience a view of the work's sources. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Nov. 10-13 at 7:30.)

"★★★★
ONE OF THE VERY BEST MOVIES OF THE YEAR."
Glenn Kenny, PREMIERE

SIDEWAYS

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF
ELECTION AND ABOUT SCHMIDT



NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL
OFFICIAL SELECTION CHICAGO FILM FESTIVAL

FOX SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES PRESENTS A MICHAEL LONDON PRODUCTION "SIDEWAYS" PAUL GIAMATTI THOMAS HADEN CHURCH VIRGINIA MADSEN SANDRA OH
MUSIC BY ROLFE KENT MUSIC SUPERVISOR DONDI BASTONE CO-PRODUCER GEORGE PARRA COSTUME DESIGNER WENDY CHUCK FILM EDITOR KEVIN TENT, A.C.E. PRODUCTION DESIGNER JANE ANN STEWART DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY PHEDON PAPAMICHAEL, ASC
PRODUCED BY MICHAEL LONDON BASED ON THE NOVEL BY REX PICKETT SCREENPLAY BY ALEXANDER PAYNE & JIM TAYLOR DIRECTED BY ALEXANDER PAYNE
SOUNDTRACK ON NEW LINE RECORDS

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THIS WEEK'S
WEB EXCLUSIVE

Jon Lee Anderson talks
about the insurgency in Iraq.

THE HARD DRIVE
An archive of hundreds of past Web exclusives, including Q. & A.s, cover galleries, slide shows, Web sightings, and more.

THE FILM FILE
A decade of New Yorker Film Notes.

EVENTS
A calendar of New Yorker events across the country.

HOI POLLOI
The Boston-based choreographer Sara Sweet Rabidoux makes story dances that unfold in taut, cinematic scenes. Her New York début includes a ghost story about a girl's doomed love for a pirate and a horror-movie version of Ravel's "L'Enfant et les Sortilèges." Rabidoux's choreography is dramatic and often deliberately ungainly, but the mix of bodies, musical styles, and postures coalesces into a dreamlike whole. Dance sequences alternate with cabaret performances by the trapped-in-the-eighties group Heloise and the Savoir Faire Dancers, who bill themselves as "one part Blondie, one part 'Fraggle Rock.' " (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. Nov. 11-13 at 8.)

BARBARA MAHLER AND MEG WOLFE
Danspace Project's "Share" series presents work by two choreographers. "Fragments," by Mahler, is a series of solos, duets, and trios performed by Mahler, Amy Kail, and Vicky Shick. Wolfe's "Stormy Days with Josephine" is a dance-theatre piece set in Los Angeles, about random encounters that follow a freeway accident. The original score is performed live by the electric violinist Lyris Hung. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. Nov. 12-14 at 8:30.)

"ASHKENAZI WEDDING"
In the first installment of a three-part series at the 92nd Street Y, "Music and Dance of the Jewish Wedding," musicians and dancers reënact traditional Eastern European Jewish wedding ceremonies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, joined by the klezmer band Khevrisa. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Nov. 10 at 8.)

"NOW LEAVING VANDERVILLE"
In her season at Dixon Place, Ivy Baldwin presents "La Table," a duet in which two haughty women lose their manners and their motor control at a dinner party; and the title piece, an absurdist dance-theatre work in which the residents of a small town stuff ducks for a living, wage war on Mondays, and crown their queens in "meatball dances." (258 Bowery, near Houston St. 212-219-0736. Nov. 11-13 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

MEGADETH
Dave Mustaine, who founded this heavy-metal band two decades ago after being fired from Metallica, was reportedly quite upset about some of the footage in the weepy Metallica documentary, "Some Kind of Monster," which was released earlier this year. This might explain why the latest Megadeth album, "The System Has Failed," returns Mustaine and company to the rabid form of their mid-eighties glory days. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 212-307-7171. Nov. 10 at 7:30.)

PETER CINCOTTI
At twenty-one, Cincotti draws on charm and an experienced-beyond-his-years poise, a formula that brought another retro-minded pianist-singer, Harry Connick, Jr., to fame. With the seventy-nine-year-old vocalist **Jimmy Scott,** who brings a lifetime of turbulent ups and downs to his performances. (Rose Theatre, Time Warner Center, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. Nov. 10-11 at 8.)

SLAYER
This speed-metal band's breakthrough album was "Reign in Blood," released in 1986. Keen on showing that the passing years have not depleted their imagination, Slayer are currently on their "Wall of Blood" tour, which has a special sanguine twist: each night the stage, the performers, and their instruments will be drenched in more than a hundred and fifty liters of theatrical blood. (Roseland. Nov. 11 at 7.)

INTERPOL
The sombre and sharply dressed New York City rockers return with a second album, "Antics." It finds the band flirting with music that could be called upbeat, although it is still steeped in melodrama. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 212-307-7171. Nov. 11-12 at 7:30.)

JOHN ADAMS'S "IN YOUR EAR" FESTIVAL
The composer culls music from the four corners of the earth. Nov. 11 at 8:30: **Souad Massi,** a Paris-based Algerian singer. Nov. 13 at 8:30: The American jazz saxophonist **Joshua Redman.** Nov. 14 at 8: The Persian spike-fiddle player **Kayhan Kalhor** (see Classical). (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800.)

STEW
This raconteur and singer from Los Angeles writes songs that echo Cole Porter, Burt Bacharach, and Randy Newman. He's here for a pair of shows, backed by eight musicians, that will feature songs from his solo albums and from the work he's done with his band the Negro Problem. (Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Nov. 12 at 7:30 and 9:30.)

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
Nov. 12-13 at 8: The last major jazzman to score a documentary focussing on the boxing legend Jack Johnson was Miles Davis in 1970. Now Wynton Marsalis is taking a shot at it. His new work for Ken Burns's upcoming film "Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson" has little in common with Davis's funked-up jamming—Marsalis's idiomatic renderings call up the music of Johnson's early-twentieth-century heyday. Here, Marsalis's septet performs the music as a live accompaniment to clips from the film. (Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
Marcel Khalife, a Lebanese master of the fretless lute known as the oud. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. For more information, call 212-545-7536. Nov. 13 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Nov. 11: **The Hidden Cameras'** shows are almost always spectacular (dancers, choruses, and constant instrument switches), but that doesn't overshadow their music. Their ringleader, Joel Gibbs, has an ear for soaring, propulsive melodies, and the songs on their new album, "Mississauga Goddam," sound like the creations of a gay, white Supremes. They appear here with the equally exuberant **Arcade Fire,** whose sweat-drenched internationalist rock anthems and married-couple interplay were warmly received on the Internet, which led to their starring role in the recent C.M.J. festival. Nov. 14: **Helmet** was one of the more innovative local bands of the nineties. The group welded together the guitar bluster of heavy metal and the adrenaline rush of punk, along with time signatures reminiscent of those in avant-garde jazz. Helmet broke up in 1999, but they're back, with a new rhythm section and a pounding new album, "Size Matters," that puts an unfortunate emphasis on singing.

DARK LIGHT
366 Eighth Ave., between 28th and 29th Sts. (212-279-8628)—The mythical days of squeegee-man New York meet premium-bottle service at this new night club. A playfully wild décor—tables are made of driftwood, and a fake magnolia tree stands in the middle of the room—is complemented by an imaginative approach to late-night entertainment. The saxophonist Robert Aaron, who has worked with everyone from David Bowie to Wyclef Jean (who celebrated his birthday here a few weeks ago) occasionally plays over the d.j.'s eclectic mix. Circus performers and graffiti artists have also plied their trade here. You can see the handiwork of the latter group out back, where the walls bear fresh tags from such street artists as EZO, Zephyr, and Revolt.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Nov. 10: The Liverpool art-rock foursome **Clinic.** Nov. 12: **Matthew Sweet** stops by with songs from "Living Things," his first solo album in five years. He recorded it at home while taking a break from his recent collaborative project, the Thorns, and it features the band from his 1991 pop-rock opus, "Girlfriend." Nov. 16: The Australian country singer **Kasey Chambers** combines a movie-star bone struc-

ture with an AM-radio-ready voice and a dirt-under-the-fingernails toughness. **Holly Williams,** the daughter of Hank, Jr., opens.

JOE'S PUB

425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Nov. 10: The silken-voiced singer **Sally Timms,** of the Mekons, and **Johnny Dowd,** a Fort Worth native who revels in noirish country. Nov. 15: **Plastilina Mosh** (see This Week).

KNITTING FACTORY

74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—Nov. 12: The Japanese all-girl quartet **Ooioo** was born out of a photo shoot in 1997. Its leader, a musician called Yoshimi, is a drummer and vocalist for the joyfully noisy band the Boredoms as well as an inspiration for the Flaming Lips' 2002 album, "Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots." She pulled the band together after posing with a few friends holding guitars, and Ooioo (which is pronounced "oh-oh-eye-oh-oh") brings a similar playful spirit to its music, which ranges from heavy psychedelic romps to spacey atmospheric strolls. And they've been known to show up wearing fluorescent body paint.

LIVING ROOM

154 Ludlow St. (212-533-7235)—Nov. 11: The creepy down-home sounds of **Shivaree,** a trio led by the intoxicating singer Ambrosia Parsley. Nov. 12: **Po' Girl,** which includes Trish Klein, from the Be Good Tanyas, on vocals, favors a rich original repertoire of old-timey songs.

MERCURY LOUNGE

217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—Nov. 10: The Southern California band **Earlimart** recently released "Treble and Tremble," a vibrant pop tribute to the late singer-songwriter Elliot Smith. With the three-part harmonies and acoustic guitars of the local act **Maplewood.**

S.O.B.'S

204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—Nov. 11: The groovy Venezuelan dance band **Los Amigos Invisibles.**

SOUTHPAW

125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—Nov. 10: The Canadian singer-songwriter **Sarah Harmer.** Nov. 13: **Robyn Hitchcock,** the poet laureate of dark whimsy for more than twenty years, has a new album, "Spooked," that finds him paired with the Nashville team of David Rawlings and Gillian Welch.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL

59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through Nov. 13: **Paula West.** With each East Coast visit, this San Francisco-based singer reminds us how peaceably jazz and cabaret can coexist when fused by a sensitive and technically assured artist. West can drive a band hard, or gently reveal the emotional heart of a ballad.

BIRDLAND

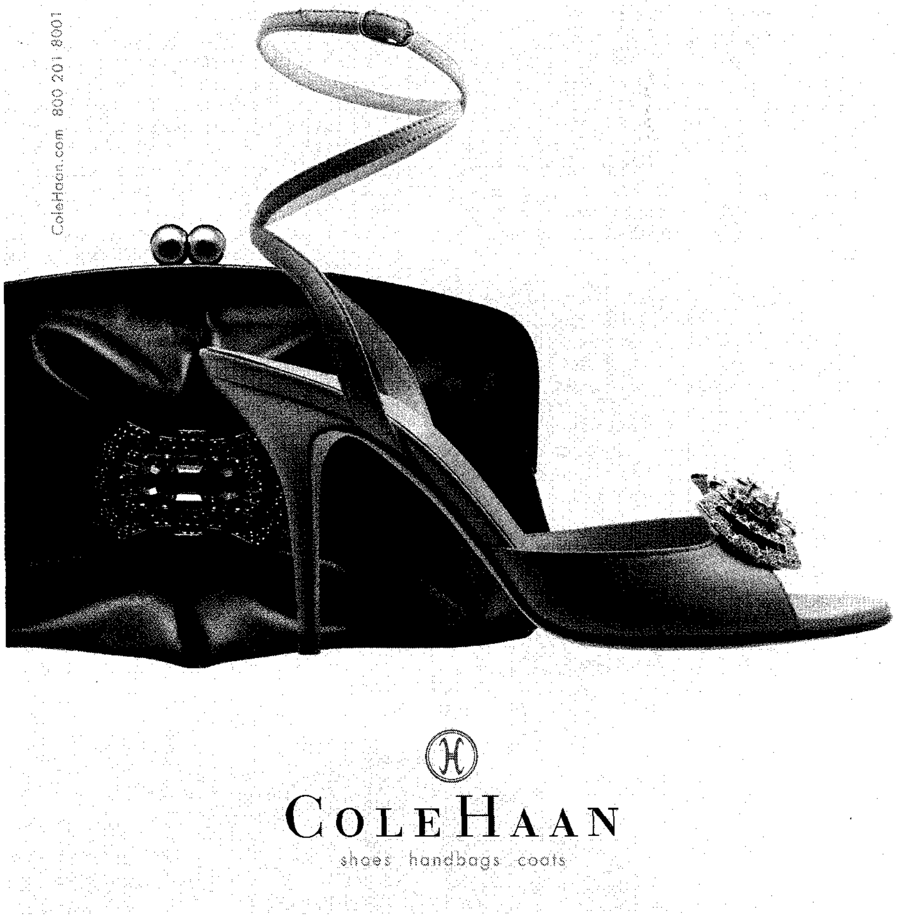
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Through Nov. 14: The Django Reinhardt New York Festival, now in its fourth year, unites **Dorado Schmitt** and other fast-fingered guitarists from Europe with American jazz musicians, including the saxophonists **Harry Allen** (Nov. 9) and **James Carter** (Nov. 11), the keyboardist and accordion player **Gil Goldstein** (Nov. 12), the saxophonist **Joel Frahm** (Nov. 13), and the vibraphonist **Dave Samuels** (Nov. 14).

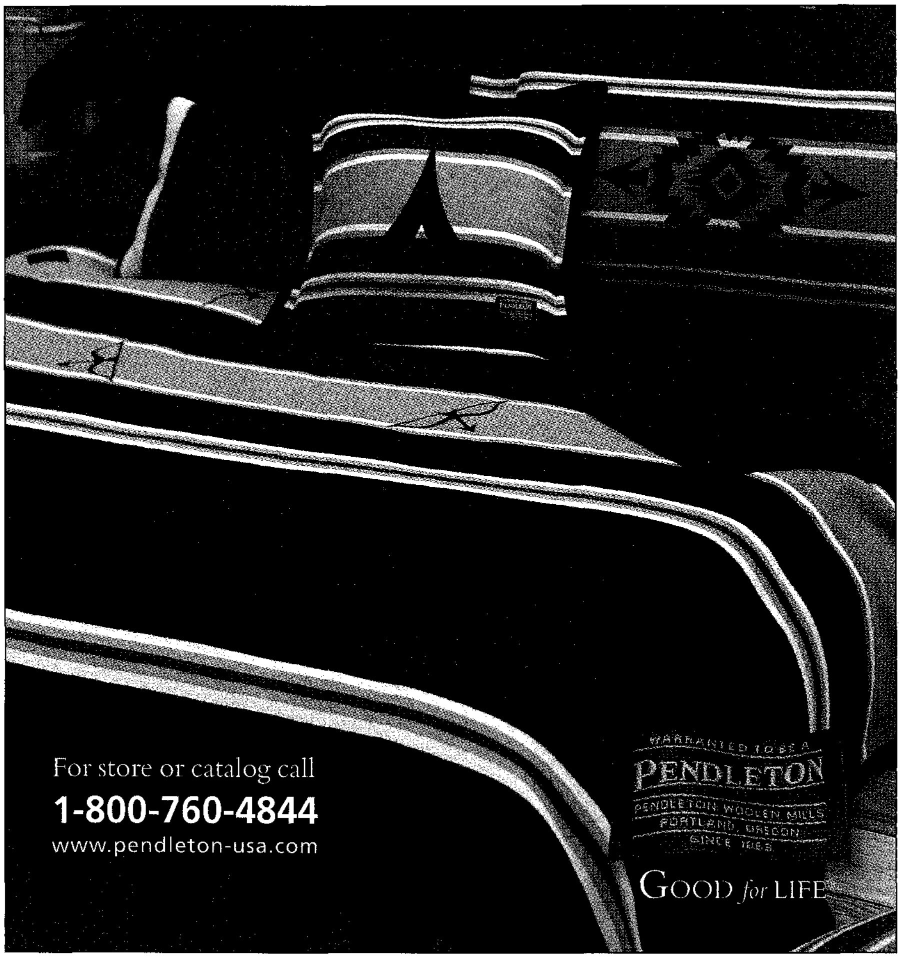
BLUE NOTE

131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Through Nov. 14: The history books will remember him as one of the most creative acoustic-jazz musicians of the modern era, but **Chick Corea** also remains loyal to plugged-in fusion, a genre he embraced during the early seventies. His Elektric Band gives him a chance to strap a keyboard across his chest and engage in sonic duels with his guitarist, Frank Gambale.

CARLYLE HOTEL

Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through Dec. 31, **Bobby Short.**





JAZZ GALLERY
290 Hudson St., near Spring St. (212-242-1063)—Nov. 10: The estimable bassist **Rufus Reid** and his trio salute James Williams, a superb pianist and ubiquitous jazz figure, who died in July.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Nov. 11-14: "Three Guitars" features fluid stylists from three distinct generations: the six-string patriarch **Larry Coryell,** the established maestro **John Abercrombie,** and the younger Brazilian singer and guitarist **Badi Assad.**

SMOKE
2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (212-864-6662)—Nov. 11-13: The tenor saxophonist **Benny Golson,** with his brawny tone, full-throttle energy, and impeccable credentials (the Jazztet, Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers), is a genuine hard-bop hero. He's also a composer with at least three classics to his name: "I Remember Clifford," "Whisper Not," and "Stablemates." And with his speaking appearance in Steven Spielberg's "The Terminal," Golson recently added acting to his résumé.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—Nov. 15: **John Hollenbeck's Claudia Quintet** makes brainy new jazz that balances the drummer's exacting writing with vivid solo work from the saxophonist **Chris Cheek** and the vibraphonist **Matt Moran. Ted Reichman,** the band's accordion player, will also front his own quartet, presenting music from his albums "Émigré" and "My Ears Are Bent."

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through Nov. 14: The saxophonist **Joe Lovano** doesn't need much more than a lean rhythm section, but his nonet finds the star improviser surrounded by horns, including three additional saxophones, trumpet, and trombone. This ensemble tears into ingeniously arranged bebop themes with the same agility and imagination that it brings to spirited free jazz. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—**"William Kentridge,"** a selection of the South African artist's works dating from 1989 to 2001, opens Nov. 12. ♦ **"China: Dawn of a Golden Age, 200-750 A.D."** Through Jan. 23. ♦ **"Princely Splendor: The Dresden Court, 1580-1620."** Through Jan. 30. ♦ **"The Colonial Andes: Tapestries and Silverwork, 1530-1830."** Through Dec. 12. ♦ **"Gilbert Stuart."** Through Jan. 16. ♦ **"Romare Bearden at the Met."** Through March 6. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
The museum is closed until Nov. 20, when it will reopen in its renovated and expanded building, at 11 W. 53rd Street.

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"The Aztec Empire."** Through Feb. 13. ♦ **"Kandinsky Gallery: An Inaugural Selection."** Through May 11. ♦ **"Keith Haring: New Wave Aztec."** Through Feb. 6. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—**"Isamu Noguchi: Master Sculptor."** Through Jan. 16. ♦ Jennifer Pastor's **"The Perfect Ride."** Through Jan. 16. ♦ **"The Art of Romare Bearden."** Through Jan. 9. ♦ Jacob Lawrence's **"War Series."** Through Jan. 31. ♦ **"Memorials of War."** Through Nov. 28. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Great Expectations: John Singer Sargent Painting Children."** Through Jan. 16. ♦ **"Passing/Posing: Kehinde Wiley Paintings."** Through Feb. 6. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

DAHESH MUSEUM OF ART
580 Madison Ave., at 57th St. (212-759-0606)—The latest chapter in the Dahesh's history of nineteenth-century academic art is **"Facing the Other: Charles Cordier, Ethnographic Sculptor."** Cordier (1827-1905), a favorite of Napoleon III and Baron James de Rothschild, attempted a sculptural catalogue of every race considered "exotic" by the French, which included their Italian neighbors as well as Greeks,

"Eve Knighting Daguerre," from a show of new work by Joel-Peter Witkin at Ricco/Maresca (see Photography).

Arabs, and Chinese. A heavy-lidded "African Venus" bought by Queen Victoria in 1851 is on loan from the current English monarch. The sculpture of Saïd Abdallah, a former Nubian slave turned art model, was first exhibited in 1848, the year slavery was abolished in France. And a "Jewish Woman from Algiers" (1872), made of deeply veined onyx marble and bright enamelled bronze, suggests that sculpting the Other required materials beyond the staid white marble and bronze used for European subjects. Through Jan. 9. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
Seventh Ave. at 27th St. (212-217-5800)—A couture princess feeling lucky in 1953 could step out in Charles James's "four-leaf clover" ball gown, a billowing quadruplicate confection in shocking-pink silk taffeta. In 1961, she might have worn Balenciaga's ivory silk sheath, which looks like a Noguchi lamp, while in 1985 she might have been part Riding Hood, part grandmother, part wolf in Azzedine Alaïa's red wool coat. These and many more wondrously constructed, draped, or otherwise extreme silhouettes appear in **"Form Follows Fashion,"** a survey of avant-garde design including gowns by Yoshi Yamamoto, Rei Kawakubo, Martin Margiela, and Pierre Cardin. Through Dec. 31. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, noon to 8; Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

GALLERIES–UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

IAN HAMILTON FINLAY
What looks like dilettantism has paid off for Finlay, whose diverse interests and studies—among them poetry, gardening, philosophy, and shepherding—merge in this survey of his witty and profound prints. The clean, handsome images are dominated by text; sometimes they are no more than a cluster of words, like "Pastor of oaks, shepherd of stones" or "Retardé dans sa course par des cerises." Others address history ("Les Femmes de la Révolution" pairs historical French figures with botanical flower prints), literature, and architecture. Spare, smart, and delightful. Through Dec. 3. (UBS Gallery, 1285 Sixth Ave. 212-713-2885.)

"JEWELS IN HER CROWN: TREASURES FROM THE SPECIAL COLLECTIONS OF COLUMBIA'S LIBRARIES"
A letter from Abraham Lincoln thanking the school for an honorary degree—he was too busy conducting the Civil War to collect it—shares shelf space with a cone-shaped cuneiform tablet circa 2060 B.C. from the ancient city of Ur. A German manual of military surgery, published in 1528, illustrates gory amputations, while Marie Curie's mortarboard represents more recent science. Note: Visitors without Columbia I.D. must gain building access through the Library Information Office. Through Jan. 28. (Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Butler Library, Columbia University; enter at 115th St. and Broadway. 212-854-5590.)

GALLERIES–CHELSEA

DAVID ALTMEJD / CRAIG KALPAKJIAN
Altmejd's millennial-gothic sculptures place carefully constructed tableaux of skeletons, fake hair, plants, and crystals on mirrored platforms. The results are both creepy and tasteful, like what Martha Stewart might devise for a Halloween table decoration. Kalpakjian works in an entirely different mode, creating fake scenes on a computer that look real when printed as photographs. A video, "Frequency," is a loose animation remake of Michael Snow's seminal structuralist film, "Wavelength." Where Snow slowly zoomed across an eighty-foot loft, Kalpakjian moves slowly down a hallway that exists only in the virtual realm. Through Nov. 27. (Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 212-627-6000.)

JOSH DORMAN / BRIAN MOSS
Dorman's paintings depict the dream territory of ocean trenches filled with sunken boats, or translucent, geometric cityscapes rendered in hot colors. Lest the drama of such imagery suffocate its wit, Dorman paints on top of old maps, which he collages into Borgesian countries of the imagination or seizes as occasions for doodly marginalia (a place called Rabbit Hill is adorned with an otherwise incongruous white rabbit). The maps' utilitarian cool balances the frenetic painted scenery, keeping it, as it were, grounded. A series of richly colored photographic self-portraits by Brian Moss (made with multi-hour exposures) are also on view. Through Nov. 27. (CUE Art Foundation, 511 W. 25th St. 212-206-3583.)

SUSAN ROTHENBERG
Thirty years of drawings executed in graphite, charcoal, and watercolor are covered here, a vivid evolutionary track stretching back to the seventies. Rothenberg's early primitive animal forms depict horses bisected or doubled, the better to study their contours. Later, humans arrive: heads, mostly, often marked by hollow, mask-like features. A few fertility forms—à la Ana Mendieta or Judy Chicago—soon emerge. And then the human figure finally takes over, standing up to stretch in some images, then dancing with full articulation across the paper. Through Dec. 18. (Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St. 212-999-7337.)

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

TORBEN GIEHLER
Three large, dizzying Day-Glo paintings both simulate and derive from the virtual realm. The careening lines of "Lost Highway" obliterate the horizon found in earlier Giehler works. "JPEG Twister" is a spinning neon vortex, and "Theomania" looks like an explosion of stained-glass shards. Two smaller canvases, "Flip Flop" and "Crunch," wear their modernist influence on their palette-knife-smoothed surfaces; one can see why one essayist dubbed the work "Mondrian on Ecstasy." Through Nov. 27. (Koenig, 249 Centre St. 212-334-9255.)

Short List

RICHARD TUTTLE
The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St.
212-219-2166. Through Feb. 26.

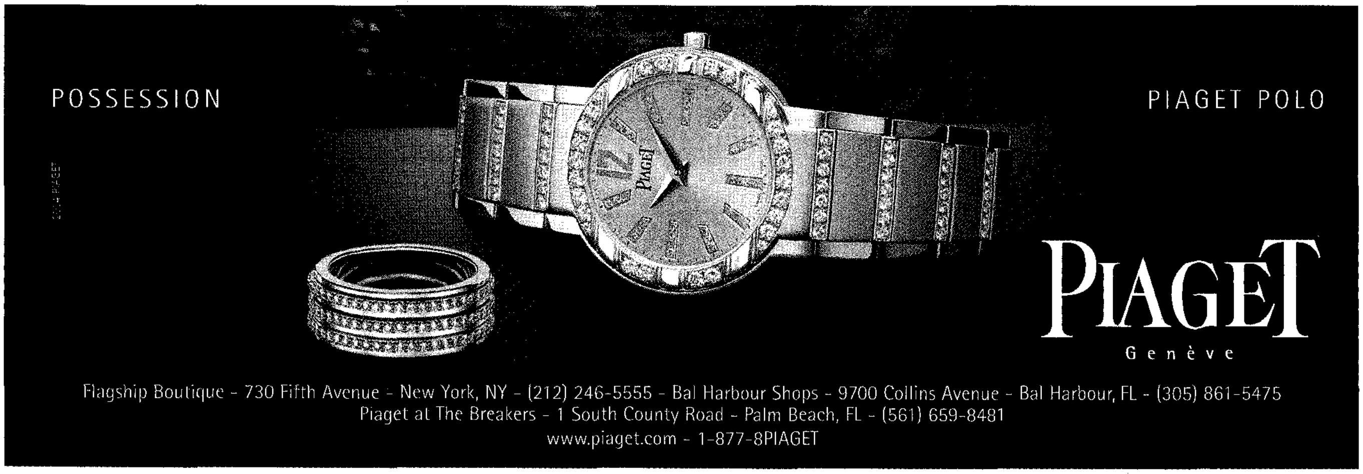
GALLERIES–BROOKLYN

BRIAN CONLEY
In Conley's installation "Decipherment of Linear X," the tracks carved into tree bark by Scolytidae beetles are compared—with surprising precision—to the syllabary of Linear B, one of the earliest known written languages. It's a layered inquiry into animal intelligence and the origins of thought. But it also looks beautiful. Through Nov. 15. (Pierogi, 177 N. 9th St. 718-599-2144.)

"NEW AMERICAN STORY ART"
A show in which artists create offbeat visual narratives using the forms of the comic book, the notebook, the photo-essay, or the storyboard. Cartoon-diarist Jim Torok draws Kirk Douglas as van Gogh cutting off his ear in "Lust for Life," with pencilled asides like "*This* has got to hurt." Dotty Attie's cluster of tiny paintings alternate tough-guy violence with poetic phrases; Joe Sacco presents panels from his graphic novel "Palestine." Also included are work by Sue Coe, Renee French, Carla Gannis, David Kramer, Larry Krone, Nate Larson, and Scott Teplin. Through Nov. 14. (Eyewash at Parker's Box, 193 Grand St. 718-388-2882.)

GALLERIES–QUEENS

"AN AMERICAN ODYSSEY: 1945-1980"
The curator Stephen Foster's survey doesn't neglect the usual suspects, but it's also cheerfully willing to surprise. Giorgio Cavallon, a Pollock favorite, is shown alongside Rothko, Gottlieb, Kline, Guston, and a de Kooning from the mid-seventies done on newspaper. Pop is represented by Ray Johnson as well as Warhol and Larry Rivers's quirky "Dutchmasters and Cigars III" (1964). American painters' engagement with photography is addressed with works like John Salt's "Purple Impala" (1973) and a 1992 Richard Estes view of City Hall. And he goes beyond the standard Krasner-Nevelson-Frankenthaler triumvirate to include women artists like Carole Feuerman, whose 1984 sculpture of a woman in a macramé bikini is like a sexy version of a Duane Hanson dummy. Through Jan. 13. (Queensborough Community College Art Gallery, 222-05 56th Ave., at Springfield Blvd. 718-631-6396.)



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PHOTOGRAPHY

"PICTURING THE SOUTH"
These images of the American South by four photographers—William Christenberry, William Eggleston, Walker Evans, and Alec Soth—seem to borrow each other's details. Evans's silver-gelatin prints from the thirties, of sharecroppers' shacks, ruined mansions, barbershops, and war memorials, are remarkable for the clarity of their surfaces. Christenberry offers smaller color views of faded signs; a series of sixteen photos taken between 1964 and 1991, of the same storefront in Greensboro, Alabama, subtly documents a sad decline. Eggleston is represented by a portfolio of his revolutionary, vibrantly colored dye-transfer prints from the seventies, and Soth's extra-large color prints from 2002 include atmospheric landscapes (swamp with sodden mattress) and a beauty of an old New Orleans blonde dolled up for Easter. Through Dec. 4. (Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 212-759-7999.)

"3 ON THE SUBWAY"
Three exhibits mounted to coincide with the hundredth anniversary of the New York City subway system. ♦ Camilo José Vergara, a Chilean-born "urban archivist" who won a MacArthur grant, has shot pictures in and of the subway since 1970; the seventy-five color images on display, selected from tens of thousands of pictures, are identified by date and subway line and include the usual suspects—preachers, mariachis, kids gawking out the front door of the D train on their way to Coney Island—as well as shots of trains approaching, trains receding, trains in the cityscape, trains emerging from underground, trains impastoed with graffiti, and elevated train tracks in the snow. ♦ In "Rebuilding the 1 & 9," Sam Hollenshead has documented the men and machines that rebuilt, within a year, the subway tunnel and platforms at Ground Zero. The industrial framework, the shadows, and the grime make for rugged black-and-white portraits of laborers whose work, when finished, is largely invisible. ♦ Bruce Davidson's "Subway" series was last seen in its entirety at the International Center of Photography in 1981. Flesh—naked, scarred, heavily made up, and squeezing between the closing doors—is the subject of these lush color photographs. One image shows a meticulously turned-out society woman in a red straw hat and jewelry; another is of a flashy young woman riding between cars on an A train over Jamaica Bay. Through Jan. 17. (Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. 212-534-1672.)

"TOPOGRAPHICS"
Beginning with Henry Fox Talbot's salt print of a stone bridge seemingly lost in the woods, from 1854, and ending with a shot of São Paulo—the frame split only by high-rises and a forbidding gray sky—taken this year by Scott Peterman, "Topographics" shows how photographers have studied landscape for the last hundred and fifty years. Gustave Le Gray made a triptych of the pyramids at Giza in the eighteen-sixties, and Neil Armstrong shot the first footprint on the moon a hundred years later. Ansel Adams is famous for his pictures of seemingly undisturbed natural monuments but here has a picture called "Moon and TV Antennae, Hawaii" that includes not a single mountain or tree. The "New Topographics" group, including Lewis Baltz, Frank Gohlke, and Stephen Shore, is represented by pictures of a wall, grain elevators, and a roadside picnic area, and their conceptual forefathers Albert Renger-Patzsch, Walker Evans, and Edward Weston look more prescient than ever. Through Nov. 13. (Bruce Silverstein, 535 W. 24th St. 212-627-3930.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
In "Looking at *Life*," two hundred prints taken for that magazine between 1936 and 1992 provide both a survey of photojournalism and a capsule history of much of the twentieth century. John Steinbeck's "Grapes of Wrath" began as an assignment for *Life* in migrant-labor camps in 1939 with the photographer Horace Bristol. The exhibition is organized by theme: "War" includes Robert Capa's D Day pictures and Larry Burrows's harrowing shots from Vietnam. In "Personalities," a young Cassius Clay trains underwater in a photo-essay by Flip Schulke, and Marilyn Monroe is giddy in portraits by Alfred Eisenstadt. ♦ The digital snapshots in "Inconvenient Evidence: Iraqi Prison Photographs from Abu Ghraib" are small, unframed, and hung with strict simplicity in a small room downstairs. Some of the images first appeared in this magazine. Through Nov. 28. (1133 Sixth Ave. 212-857-0000.)

Short List

CLEVERSON
M.Y. Art Prospects, 547 W. 27th St.
212-268-7132. Through Nov. 20.
RAGHUBIR SINGH
Sepia, 148 W. 24th St. 212-645-9444.
Through Dec. 30.
JOEL-PETER WITKIN
Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-4819.
Through Dec. 31.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

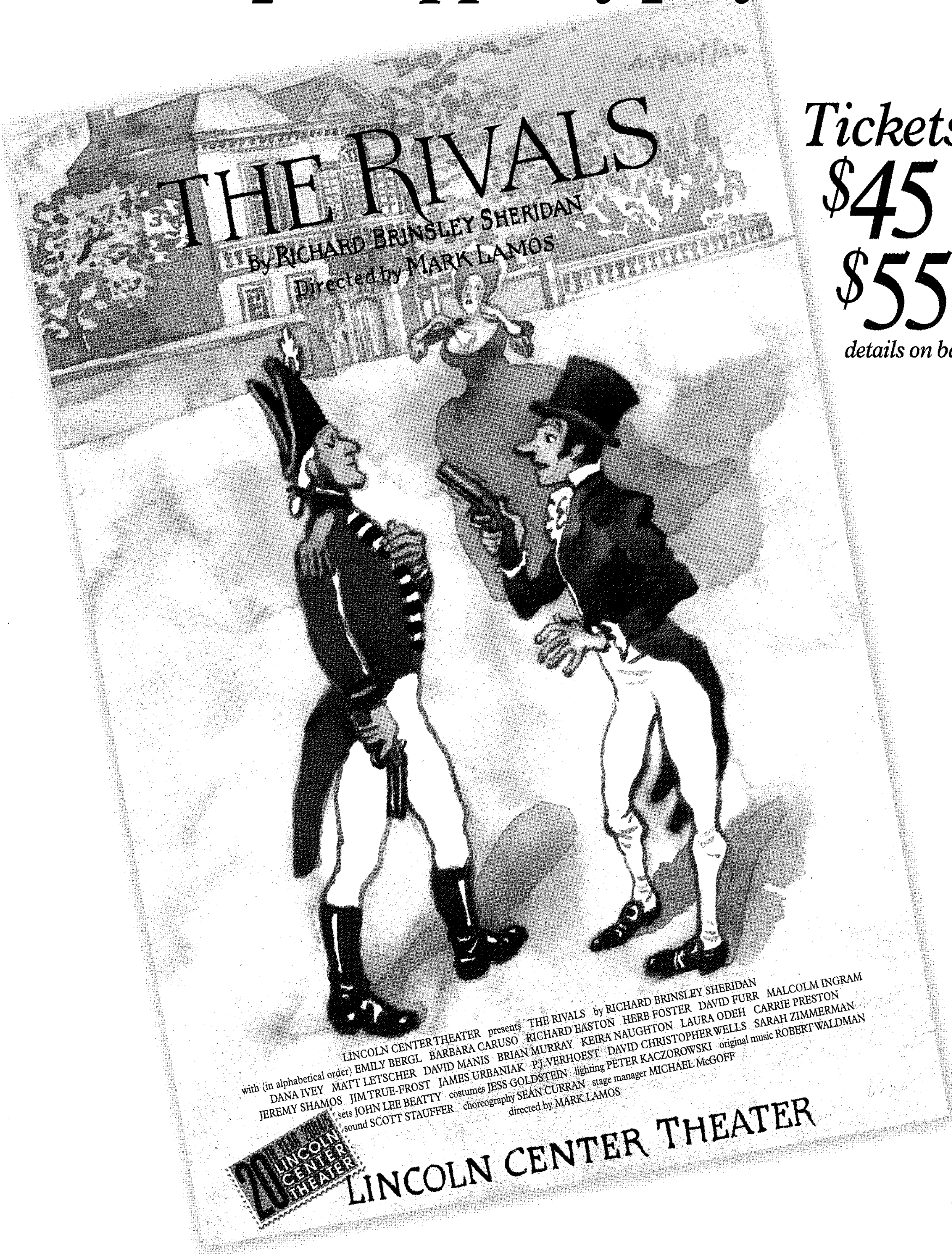
SOTHEBY'S
Nov. 10 at 10:15 A.M.: The morning session of the second day of Sotheby's two-day contemporary-art sale includes a profusion of Warhols—from an impressively alert male (lower) torso to a "Diamond Dust Oxidation Painting" executed in diamond dust, metallic pigment, and urine—along with works by Albers, Noguchi, Kline, and Diebenkorn, a fetching rabbit in colored pencil by Wayne Thiebaud, and a painterly, Cézanne-like work by David Park. ♦ Nov. 10 at 2: The final session is dominated by photography, with works by Nan Goldin, Cindy Sherman, Richard Prince (some confident cowboys and their irrepressible girlfriends), and Gabriel Orozco, but there are also vibrant paintings and sculptures by such figures as Haring and Basquiat and a group of fifteen childish yet hauntingly bizarre drawings by Yoshitomo Nara. ♦ Nov. 11 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: The Biwat tribe of New Guinea depended upon statuettes of ferocious spirits to protect their musical instruments, and the specimen highlighted in this auction of African, pre-Columbian, and Oceanic tribal artifacts, with its maniacal grin and explosion of feathered hair, was probably up to the job. Other lots exhibit a tamer form of primitivism, including an exquisite sixteenth-century ivory bracelet from Benin and a Mayan blackware vessel, circa 250-450 A.D. ♦ Nov. 16 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: A rare package of Hemingway's letters, foulmouthed and petulant, written from 1948 to 1952 to the literary historian Malcolm Cowley, is the centerpiece of this sale from the Maurice Neville collection of modern literature. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
Nov. 10 at 7: The riveting centerpiece of this sale of postwar and contemporary art is Andy Warhol's "Mustard Race Riot," a set of panels replicating an image of a black protester beset by attack dogs in Birmingham, Alabama. The auction also features equally compelling works by Koons, Johns, Calder, and Twombly, among others. ♦ Nov. 11 at 10 A.M.: The sale continues with works by master ironists (Warhol's "The American Indian," Lichtenstein's "Study for Reflections on Soda Fountain") and their competitors (Ralph Goings's hyperrealist "Sizzle Kitchen," which offers a sunny view of burgers-and-fries America, and Louise Bourgeois's untitled assembly of glass orbs, knitted sacs, and disembodied arms, which plays darkly on themes of gender and identity). ♦ Nov. 11 at 2: The sale concludes with well-known Abstract Expressionist and minimalist works by such artists as Flavin, Ryman, and Judd. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

PHILLIPS
Nov. 11 at 7 and Nov. 12 at 11 A.M.: The third of the city's major houses, not always sure of itself, offers an impressive pair of shows featuring such works as Francis Bacon's luridly purple-and-orange nude study "Oedipus" (expected to sell for up to six million dollars), along with paintings and photographs by Goldin, Prince, Warhol, and many others. (450 W. 15th St. 212-940-1200.)

As Mrs. Malaprop might have said...

"It is the pineapple of perfection!"


THE RIVALS
By RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN
Directed by MARK LAMOS
20th YEAR 2005 LINCOLN CENTER THEATER
LINCOLN CENTER THEATER

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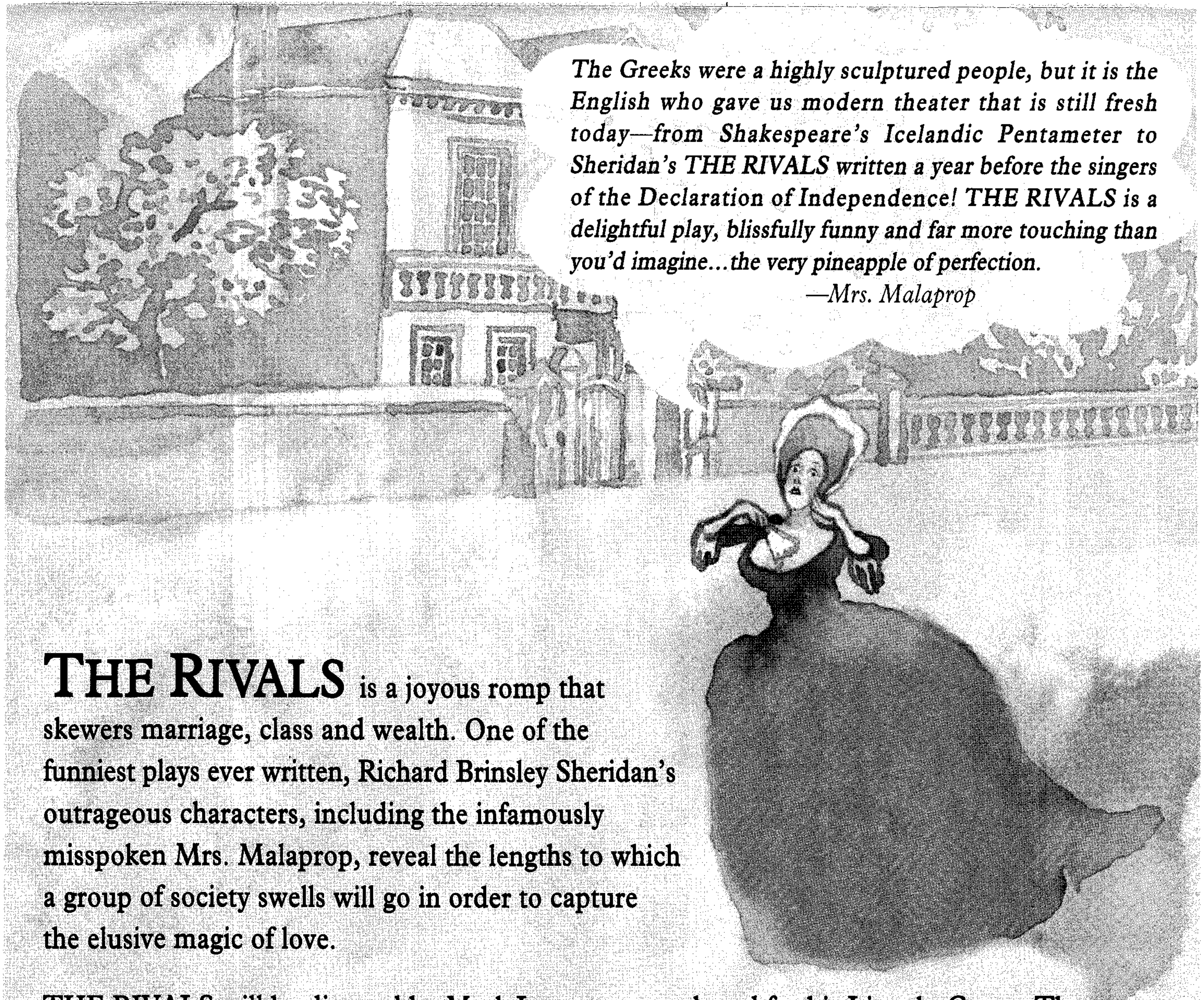

The Greeks were a highly sculptured people, but it is the English who gave us modern theater that is still fresh today—from Shakespeare's Icelandic Pentameter to Sheridan's THE RIVALS written a year before the singers of the Declaration of Independence! THE RIVALS is a delightful play, blissfully funny and far more touching than you'd imagine...the very pineapple of perfection.

—Mrs. Malaprop

THE RIVALS is a joyous romp that skewers marriage, class and wealth. One of the funniest plays ever written, Richard Brinsley Sheridan's outrageous characters, including the infamously misspoken Mrs. Malaprop, reveal the lengths to which a group of society swells will go in order to capture the elusive magic of love.

THE RIVALS will be directed by Mark Lamos, remembered for his Lincoln Center Theater productions of *Big Bill* and *Measure for Measure.* The ensemble cast of THE RIVALS includes (at press time) Richard Easton *(Henry IV, The Invention of Love),* Dana Ivey *(Henry IV, Sex and Longing)* and Brian Murray *(Racing Demon, Twelfth Night)* returning to the Beaumont along with Emily Bergl, Barbara Caruso, Herb Foster, David Furr, Malcolm Ingram, Matt Letscher, David Manis, Keira Naughton, Laura Odeh, Carrie Preston, Jeremy Shamos, Jim True-Frost, James Urbaniak, P.J. Verhoest, David Christopher Wells and Sarah Zimmerman. This comedy of manners is delightful for audiences of all ages.

TICKETS $55/$45 IF YOU PURCHASE BY DEC. 15

Offer good for performances through December 15th. Orchestra and Front Loge (regularly $80) are on sale for $55. Rear Loge (regularly $55) are on sale for $45. Present this ad at the Beaumont Theater box office, 150 West 65th Street, or use code TRNYMAG online at broadwayoffers.com or by phone at Telecharge.com 212-947-8844. Regular phone/online service charges apply. All seats subject to availability. Limit of 6 tickets. All sales are final. No refunds, exchanges or retroactive discounts.

20TH YEAR 2004/5 LINCOLN CENTER THEATER

THE RIVALS is supported by a major grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.
This production is made possible by a special fund for LCT established by The Peter Jay Sharp Foundation.

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TABLES FOR TWO

LITTLE GIANT
85 Orchard St. (212-226-5047)—The Little Giant, the eponymous house cocktail, is a shot of tequila, plus a lime slice powdered with espresso grinds and sugar. You do the shot, then place the lime on your tongue, coffee side down. The combination may sound silly, but it works wonders: it tastes great, rearranges your mood, and conveys in an instant that this modest place has big intentions. The name of the place (and the drink) derives from an Oklahoma pump manufacturer, but the owners, an enthusiastic pair of young women named Julie Taras and Tasha Garcia, are really referring to their underdog status: they have a tiny budget in a tough restaurant town.

The space is airy and simple, with a vaulted ceiling of old brick, and blond plywood shelves, tables, and chairs that were designed and built—without nails—by Taras's brother Jeffrey, an architecture student at Columbia. The do-it-yourself approach extends to the food; Taras and Garcia make their own sausages and corn their own beef. They have also devised unorthodox names for their concoctions; like the tequila, they seem goofy until you try them. Among the starters, on a recent evening, there was a "box of rocks" (a tin bucket of steamed cockles, accompanied by baby greens and a bowl of broth) and a "tenement soup" (a chunky pork-broth stew of ham, beans, and cabbage). One of the prize entrées—the unfortunately named "baby's got bass"—consisted of a hunk of striped bass braised in duck fat and served in a casserole dish with smoked bacon, braised fennel, baby clams, and a peppery lentil ragout. The "swine of the week" was braised pork shoulder laid ropily over an Asian-pear-and-cabbage slaw: small portion, gigantic flavor. The root-vegetable-you've-never-had of the week was a side dish of crosnes. Also called Chinese artichokes or chorogis, crosnes look like beetle larvae and taste like water chestnuts, but, in fact, they are tubers, in the mint family. Taras had discovered some at the greenmarket and pan-roasted them in butter, onions, and herbs. They were perhaps the littlest giants of all. (Open weekdays for dinner and weekends for brunch and dinner. Entrées $17-$22.)

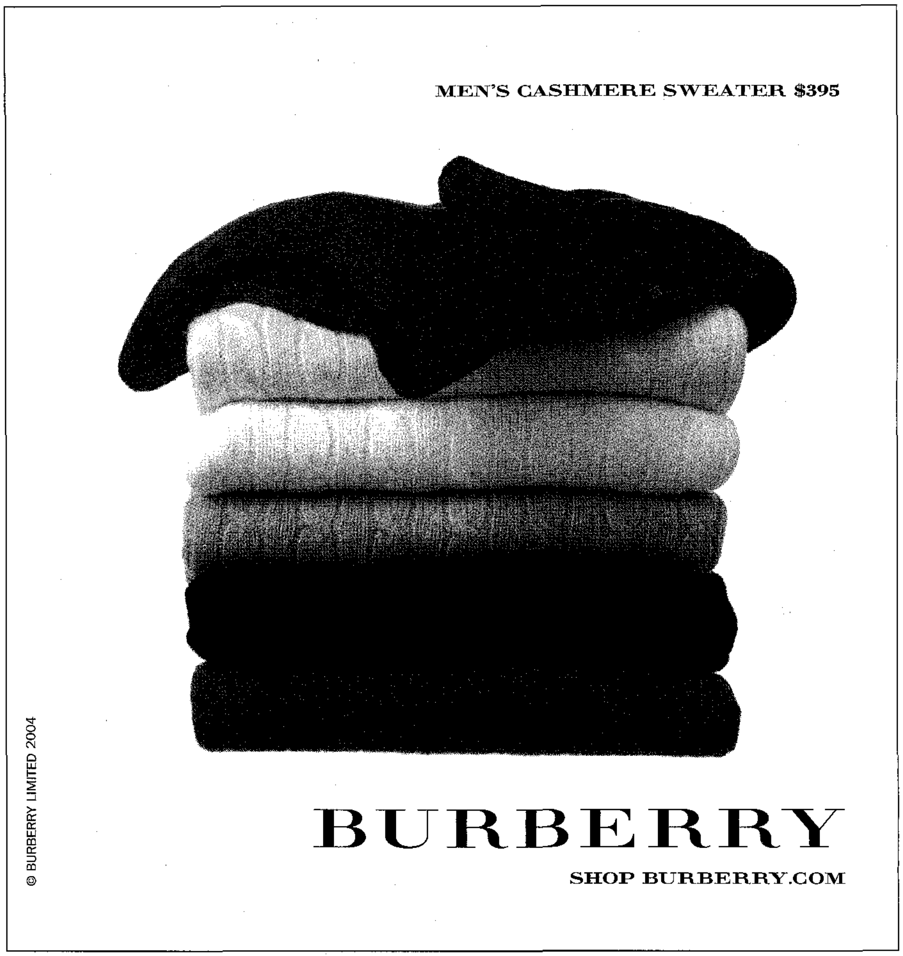
—*Nick Paumgarten*

SWANN
Nov. 9 at 2: An archive of twenty-three signed letters written by Dashiell Hammett to his secretary in the months before his blacklisting and imprisonment is a highlight of a wide-ranging sale of autographs (including a selection of Civil War letters and photographs). ♦ Nov. 15 at 10:30 A.M.: Two very rare English-language posters promoting transatlantic travel on the Hindenburg, which sported swastikas on its tail fins, add a sinister touch to a major auction of a hundred travel posters. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

TRIPLE PIER ANTIQUES SHOW
One of the season's major shows, with some six hundred exhibitors offering furniture, art works, and much more. (Piers 88, 90, and 92, Twelfth Ave. at 55th St. 212-255-0020. Nov. 13-14 and Nov. 20-21.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Nov. 10 at 7:30 and Nov. 13 at 8: Franco Zeffirelli's renowned production of the iconic double bill of **"Cavalleria Rusticana"** and **"Pagliacci"** returns, with all the vocal intensity these verismo masterworks require. In "Cav," Eva Urbanová imbues Santuzza's shrillest self-lamentations with passion, while Fabio Armiliato's sustained and bracing singing perfectly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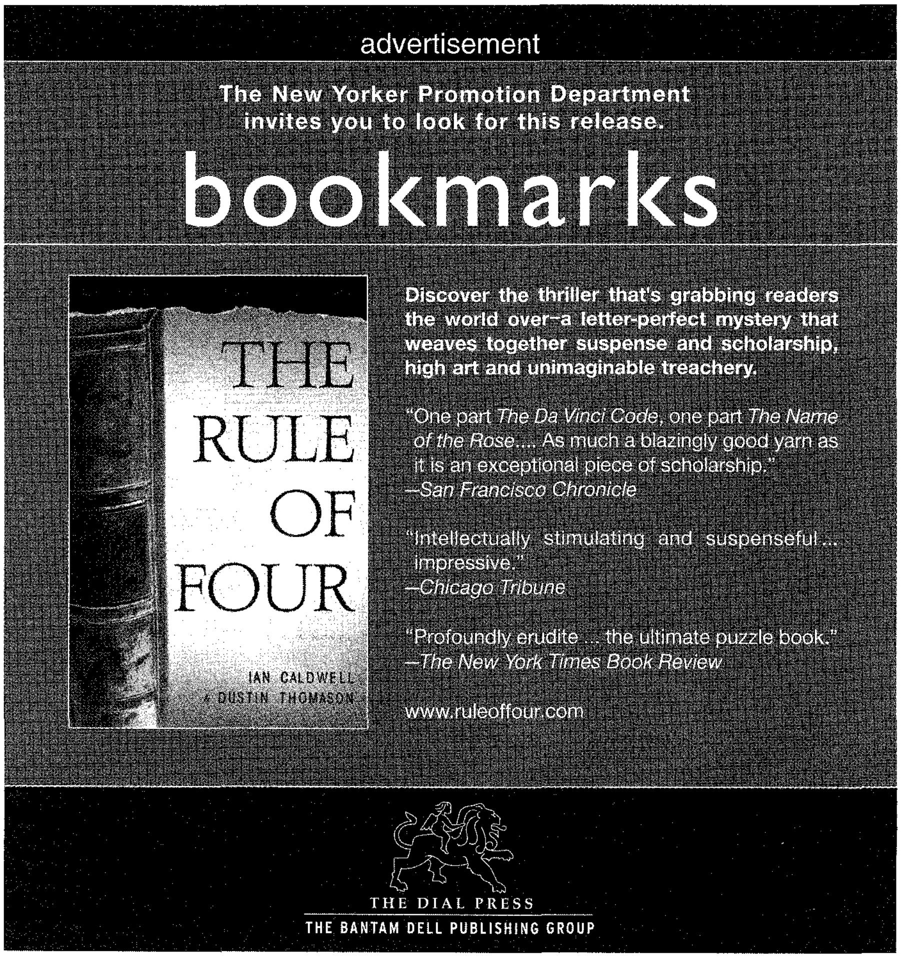
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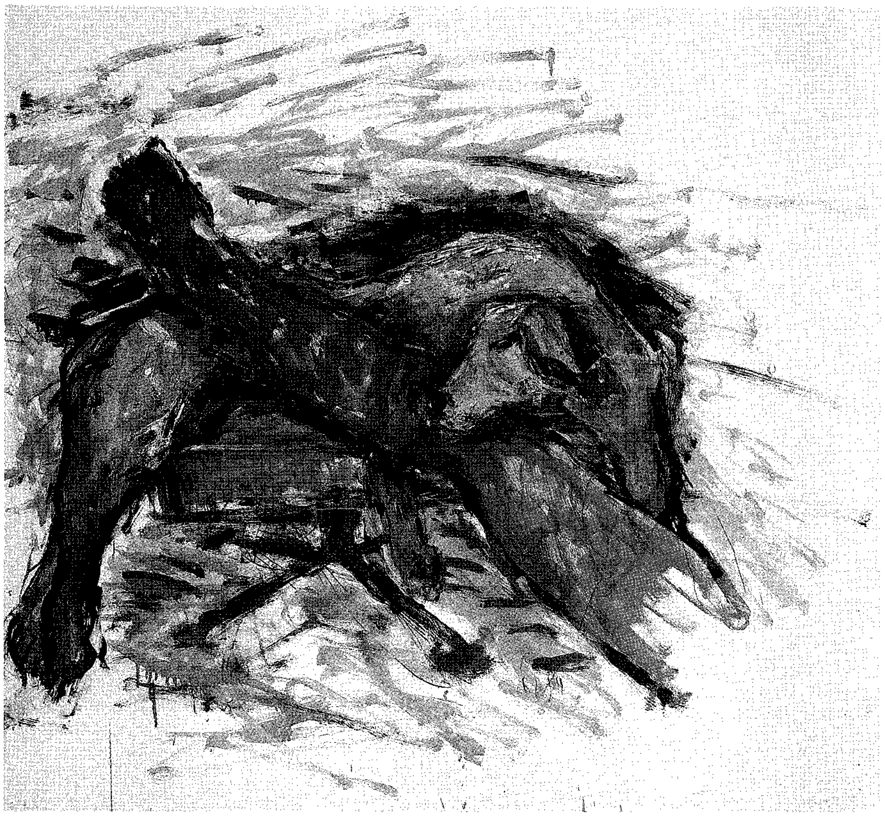


A thirty-year survey of Susan Rothenberg's drawings, at Sperone Westwater (see Art).

captures Turiddu's fatal obstinacy. Vladimir Galouzine runs away with the role of Canio in "Pag," his forceful yet supple tenor breaking with emotion at all the right points; Daniela Dessì is a careful, shifty Nedda. Dennis Russell Davies conducts these often violent scores with meticulous care; Zeffirelli washes the Sicilian landscape of "Cav" in gentle half-lights and opens "Pag" with primary-color polka dots that illuminate both the Met's claret curtain and the iridescent patchwork pants of Tonio, sung by the smooth-voiced veteran Juan Pons. (Oleg Kulko replaces Armiliato in the Nov. 10 performance.) ♦ Nov. 11 at 8: Anna Netrebko brings her lustrous voice and newly minted star quality to the role of Musetta in **"La Bohème,"** joining a cast that features Elena Evseeva (as Mimì), Frank Lopardo, and Peter Mattei; Daniel Oren conducts. ♦ Nov. 12 at 8: The final performance of **"Carmen,"** with Hei-Kyung Hong, Irina Mishura, Richard Leech, and Ildar Abdrazakov; Paul Nadler. ♦ Nov. 13 at 1:30 and Nov. 16 at 8: John Dexter's 1974 production of Verdi's **"I Vespri Siciliani"** returns to the house with a cast led by Sondra Radvanovsky, Francisco Casanova, Leo Nucci, and Samuel Ramey; Frédéric Chaslin. ♦ Nov. 15 at 8: **"Aida,"** featuring Norma Fantini (in the title role), Irina Mishura, Franco Farina, Ambrogio Maestri (his début, as Amonasro), and Kwangchul Youn; Marcello Viotti. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA

Nov. 10 at 7:30: **"The Marriage of Figaro,"** with Sharon Rostorf-Zamir, Orla Boylan, Jennifer Rivera, Joel Sorensen, David Pittsinger, Paulo Szot, and Jan Opalach; Steven Mosteller conducts. (This is the final performance.) ♦ Nov. 11 at 7:30: The final performance of City Opera's world-première production of Charles Wuorinen's **"Haroun and the Sea of Stories,"** with a libretto by James Fenton based on the Salman Rushdie novel. With Heather Buck, Peter Strummer, Joel Sorensen, James Schaffner, Ethan Herschenfeld, Ryan MacPherson, Wilbur Pauley, and Michael Zegarski; George Manahan. ♦ Nov. 12 at 8, Nov. 13 at 1:30 and 8, Nov. 14 at 1:30 and 5:30, and Nov. 16 at 7:30: To City Opera, not Broadway, goes the honor of having mounted the first New York professional stage production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's **"Cinderella,"** in 1993. It was Julie Andrews, of course, who starred in the work's original incarnation, the legendary television broadcast of March 31, 1957; this year's cast, with Sarah Uriarte Berry and Christopher Sieber (lately of "Taboo" and "Into the Woods," respectively) as the young lovers, features Eartha Kitt, Lea DeLaria, Ana Gasteyer, Renée Taylor, Dick Van Patten, and John Epperson, better known as the drag performer Lypsinka. Gerald Steichen conducts. (Through Nov. 21.) (New York State Theatre. 212-870-5570.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

Sakari Oramo, director of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, conducts the group in music by Sibelius, Tchaikovsky (the "Manfred" Symphony), and Kaija Saariaho (the American première of the orchestral version of "Quatre Instants," with the radiant soprano Karita Mattila, for whom it was composed). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. Nov. 11 at 7:30 and Nov. 12-13 at 8.)

COLLEGIATE CHORALE: "WAR REQUIEM"

In a week abounding in choral music, Robert Bass's ensemble, with the Orchestra of St. Luke's, the Riverside Choral Society, and the Brooklyn Youth Chorus, offers a Veterans Day performance of Britten's searing pacifist masterwork. The vocal soloists, all superb, are Christine Goerke, Anthony Dean Griffey, and Håkan Hagegård. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 11 at 8.)

POMERIUM: WORKS BY OCKEGHEM

Alexander Blachly leads his first-class chamber choir in several pieces by the fifteenth-century Flemish master. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. 212-279-4200. Nov. 13 at 7:30.)

AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Leon Botstein's latest rescue mission is on behalf of Carl Czerny, Beethoven's favorite pupil, who is known today for his hundreds of finger-crunching piano études. But he produced many other compositions as well, and Botstein will conduct such works as the Symphony in D Major and the "Grosse Variationen Über Joseph Haydn's Nationalgesang" (with the pianist Piers Lane). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500. Nov. 14 at 3.)

VOICES OF ASCENSION

Dennis Keene conducts the excellent professional chorus, with orchestra, in masses by Schubert and

Haydn (the "Mass in Time of War"). (Church of the Ascension, Fifth Ave. at 10th St. 212-358-1469. Nov. 15 at 8.)

PITTSBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Charles Dutoit, always vivid in Russian repertory, conducts the orchestra (which has never played better) in Act I of Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake" and the 1911 version of Stravinsky's "Petrushka." (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 16 at 8.)

RECITALS

MILLER THEATRE: ALARM WILL SOUND
The exciting Cornell University new-music group plays polyrhythmic masterworks by Conlon Nancarrow along with arrangements of works by two of his favorites—Bach and Ravel. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-254-7799. Nov. 11 at 8.)

JOHN ADAMS'S "IN YOUR EAR" FESTIVAL
In what may be a New York first, a major composer curates a wide-ranging contemporary festival without including a shred of his own work. Nov. 12 at 7:30: Paul Dresher, a longtime California composer who adds a gritty, urban edge to the Pacific Rim experimentalism of Harrison and Partch, brings his eponymous ensemble to Zankel Hall in a program that includes his Concerto for Violin and Electro-Acoustic Band. ♦ Nov. 13 at 4: The New York clarinettist and composer Evan Ziporyn, a leading member of the Bang on a Can crowd, performs with his avant-garde Balinese gamelan ensemble, Gamelan Galak Tika. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800.)

BELCEA QUARTET
The up-and-coming British group makes its Lincoln Center début with quartets by Beethoven (in A Minor, Op. 132) and Wolf. (Walter Reade Theatre. 212-721-6500. Nov. 14 at 11 A.M.)

MUSIC AT MERKIN CONCERT HALL
Nov. 14 at 3: Members of New York Philharmonic Ensembles (including the oboist Joseph Robinson) play works by Dvořák, Harbison ("Snow Country"), Copland, and Ravel (the Piano Trio). ♦ Nov. 16 at 8: More Harbison (the New York première of "Songs America Loves to Sing") graces an evening with the broad-minded Da Capo Chamber Players, who also offer premières by Chinary Ung, Dai Fujikura ("Poison Mushroom"), and Robert Paterson. (129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330.)

"MUSIC BEFORE 1800" SERIES: TRIO MEDIÆVAL
The all-female Norwegian vocal trio—widely touted as the successor to Anonymous 4—sings thirteenth-century music from France and Italy at Corpus Christi Church. (529 W. 121st St. 212-666-9266. Nov. 14 at 4.)

MUSIC AT THE FRICK COLLECTION: GAEDE TRIO
A sterling young German string trio plays virtuoso repertory by Beethoven (the Serenade in D Major, Op. 8), Dohnányi, and Ysaÿe. (1 E. 70th St. 212-288-0700. Nov. 14 at 5.)

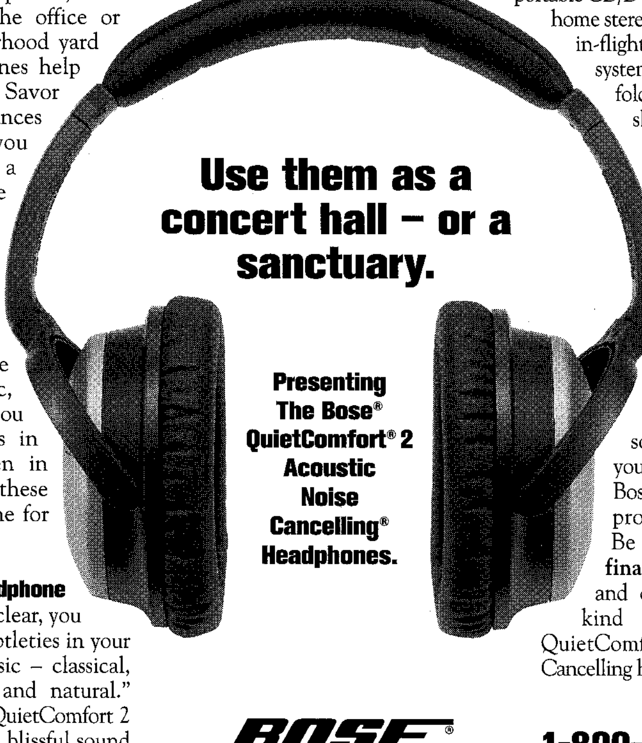
PAUL GROVES
The forceful yet elegant young American tenor sings music by Fauré, Liszt, Britten ("Canticle III: Still Falls the Rain—the Raids, 1940" and "Winter Words"), and Rachmaninoff, assisted by the pianist Pedja Muzijevic, the hornist Eric Ruske, and the violinist Jennifer Frautschi. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. Nov. 14 at 5.)

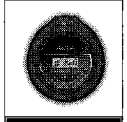
GIL AND ORLI SHAHAM
The violinist and his pianist sister, longtime recitalists, perform works by Mozart and Prokofiev (including the Violin Sonata No. 1 in F Minor). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 15 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS
Nov. 10 at 6:30: Don Paterson and Charles Simic, the editors of "New British Poetry," join contributors to the anthology, including Fred D'Aguiar, Glyn Maxwell, Ruth Padel, and Jo Shapcott, for a reading. (New School, 65 W. 11th St. Tickets at the door.) ♦ Nov. 10 at 8: Daniel Menaker, the executive editor in chief of Random House, hosts a reading from the publisher's archives, with the actors Hope Davis and John Shea and the poet Billy Collins. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400.) ♦ Nov. 10 at 8: Vince Passaro, Fran Giuffre, and other contributors to the literary Web site Mr. Beller's Neighborhood read from their work. The site's editor, Tom Beller, and Tom Cushman, a former Beastie Boys associate who runs the bookstore Murder Ink, will provide musical entertainment. (Happy Ending Bar, 302 Broome St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Nov. 13 at 2: The novelist Susan Choi reads from and discusses her work with the radio host Leonard Lopate. (Brooklyn Public Library's Central Library, Grand Army Plaza. No tickets necessary.)

TALKS
Nov. 10 at 5: The graphic designer Chip Kidd and the author Gerard Jones discuss their respective new books, "The Golden Age of DC Comics" and "Men of Tomorrow: Geeks, Gangsters, and the Birth of the Comic Book." (Jim Hanley's Universe, 4 W. 33rd St. 212-268-7088.) ♦ Nov. 11 at 8: The mystery writer S. J. Rozan talks with William Gibson about Gibson's 1984 novel, "Neuromancer." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.) ♦ Nov. 14 at 2:30: Following a screening of "Heir to an Execution," a documentary from 2003 about Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, their son Michael Meeropol talks with Morton Sobell, a friend of the Rosenbergs and the author of "On Doing Time." (Museum of Jewish Heritage, 36 Battery Pl. 646-437-4202.) ♦ Nov. 16 at 6: William Kristol, the editor of *The Weekly Standard,* Edward Rothstein, a critic for the *Times*, and Jonathan Schell, *The Nation's* peace and disarmament correspondent, discuss the media's coverage of the war in Iraq. (New School, 55 W. 13th St. For more information, call 212-229-5777.)





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MOVIES OPENING

AFTER THE SUNSET
Pierce Brosnan plays a diamond thief, in a heist movie directed by Brett Ratner. With Salma Hayek, Woody Harrelson, and Don Cheadle. Opening Nov. 12.

BRIDGET JONES: THE EDGE OF REASON
The further adventures of the neurotic singleton. With Renée Zellweger, Hugh Grant, Colin Firth, and James Broadbent. Directed by Beeban Kidron. Opening Nov. 12.

BRIGHT FUTURE
Kiyoshi Kurosawa wrote and directed this drama, about the bond between two eccentric factory workers who keep jellyfish as pets. In Japanese. Opening Nov. 12. (Cinema Village.)

FINDING NEVERLAND
A fictional account of how the Scottish writer J. M. Barrie (Johnny Depp) was inspired to write "Peter Pan." With Kate Winslet, Radha Mitchell, Julie Christie, and Dustin Hoffman. Directed by Marc Forster. Opening Nov. 12.

FIVE SIDES OF A COIN
Paul Kell's documentary about the worldwide influence of hip-hop. With Grandmaster Flash, De La Soul, Jurassic 5, and others. Opening Nov. 12. (Anthology Film Archives.)

KINSEY
Liam Neeson plays the sex researcher Alfred Kinsey, in a bio-pic written and directed by Bill Condon ("Gods and Monsters"). The cast includes Laura Linney, Chris O'Donnell, Peter Sarsgaard, and Timothy Hutton. Opening Nov. 12.

THE NEW GUY
Bilge Ebiri directed this workplace comedy, in which a recent hire (Kelly Miller) has a difficult first day. Opening Nov. 10. (Pioneer Theatre.)

NOEL
The lives of five New Yorkers intersect on Christmas Eve, in a drama directed by Chazz Palminteri. With Paul Walker, Penélope Cruz, Alan Arkin, and Susan Sarandon. Opening Nov. 12.

OVERNIGHT
A documentary about the career nosedive of Troy Duffy, a bartender-musician-screenwriter who received a movie deal from Harvey Weinstein. Opening Nov. 10. (Film Forum.)

LA PETITE LILI
Claude Miller's adaptation of "The Seagull," set in a French country house. With Ludivine Sagnier, Robinson Stévenin, Julie Depardieu, and Nicole Garcia. In French. Opening Nov. 12. (Angelika Film Center.)

THE POLAR EXPRESS
Robert Zemeckis directed this digitally animated adaptation of the children's book about a magical train to the North Pole. With Tom Hanks, who, aided by technology, plays six different roles. Opening Nov. 10.

SEED OF CHUCKY
The malevolent doll returns in his fifth film, written and directed by Don Mancini. With Jennifer Tilly and Redman. Opening Nov. 12.

WHO KILLED BAMBI?
In Gilles Marchand's surrealistic thriller, a nurse (Sophie Quinton) suspects that a charismatic doctor (Laurent Lucas) may be a murderer. In French. Opening Nov. 12. (Quad Cinemas.)

YOU SEE ME LAUGHIN'
A documentary about the current generation of Mississippi hill-country bluesmen, directed by Mandy Stein. Opening Nov. 12. (Anthology Film Archives.)

FILM NOTES

BEING JULIA
It's easy to forget about the talent of Annette Bening—she makes a movie and then disappears for a while to take care of the Beatty clan (four children, plus Warren). Those who seek out this film can revel once again in her actorly grace. It's a thirties period piece, in which Bening plays a limelight-loving actress who is having an affair with a selfish youth (Shaun Evans). Jeremy Irons shines in the role of her stage-manager husband, and the story, based on a Somerset Maugham novel, brims with sardonic humor.—*Bruce Diones* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Paris, and Union Square.)

BIRTH
A dismayingly skillful exercise in high-style creepiness. Nicole Kidman, her hair cropped close, her body reduced to a mannequin skinniness, is Anna, a Fifth Avenue heiress whose husband, Sean, died of a heart attack in Central Park when Anna was twenty-five. Ten years later, just as Anna is about to marry a good-natured man (Danny Huston) who has patiently wooed her for years, a ten-year-old boy shows up and announces that he is Sean reborn. The boy (Cameron Bright) has a steady, unnerving gaze and a pointed chin—one of those demon-child glowering masks from the "Damien: Omen II" era of horror movies. But his self-assurance, as well as his knowledge of details of Sean and Anna's life together, amazes and captivates Anna. She's convinced that he's her dead husband in a new body. As Kidman sits naked in her bath, the boy takes off his clothes and climbs in with her—one of the most embarrassing scenes in the history of the movies. The British director Jonathan Glazer directs this rubbish with an assured elegance; he creates a magical winter fairy-tale atmosphere in New York, a looming sense of the uncanny. The movie is an appalling combination of distinguished talent and inane ideas. With Lauren Bacall and Anne Heche. Music by Alexandre Desplat and, in one stunning sequence, Richard Wagner.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 11/8/04.) (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Village East Cinemas.)

ENDURING LOVE
Ian McEwan's 1988 novel has been freely adapted by Joe Penhall, and the result is directed with customary grace by Roger Michell; whether their efforts were worthwhile, or well advised, is seriously open to question. Nobody can doubt the perilous verve of the opening, in which Joe (Daniel Craig) and his girlfriend, Claire (Samantha Morton), witness a fatal balloon accident in an English field. From here on, though, the drama deflates, and we are left with the grinding, post-traumatic account of a relationship on the skids, set in a London that feels sickly with rain and spent light. Also on hand, like a bad angel, is Jed (Rhys Ifans), who was there as the balloon crashed and who subsequently makes it his mission to stalk the unfortunate Joe, apparently in the name of love. We are meant to ponder the various facets of passion, from the creepy to the domestic, as they glint throughout the film, yet one's overwhelming response is irritation—even at the climax, Joe seems either too stunned or too reflective to act as he should, and his stone-faced antiheroism is hard to take. Possibly the unfunniest movie of the year.—*Anthony Lane* (11/1/04) (Lincoln Square and Union Square.)

THE FALLEN IDOL
Carol Reed and Graham Greene collaborated on this tricky, highly original thriller from 1948. It's about the muddled attempt of an eight-year-old boy (Bobby Henrey), the son of the French ambassador to England, to protect the embassy butler, Baines (Ralph Richardson), whom he idolizes, from a charge of murder. The plot is just about perfect, and there are two wonderful parallel episodes, when the child attempts to impart vital information, which two sets of adults ignore because they think he's just prattling nonsense. There are terrifying, tense moments, too; the whole movie is very cleverly worked out. Maybe it's too deliberate, though, with its stylized lighting and its rigid pacing—you wait an extra beat between the low-key lines of dialogue. It's a polite thriller—which is close to a contradiction in terms. And the key characters—the decent Baines and the typist (Michèle Morgan) whom he loves—are too ordinary. The child actor, however, is wonderfully jittery and intelligent. (Carol Reed had a way with child performers.) And as the unhappy Mrs. Baines, the embassy housekeeper who's a malignant disciplinarian with the child, Sonia Dresdel is really good at evil; she brings the film something out of the ordinary—something clammy and horrible.—*Pauline Kael* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Nov. 10.)

FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS
Buzz Bissinger's remarkable book about a high-school football team in Texas oil country gets a worthy, slightly rock-video adaptation in the hands of the director Peter Berg. Sure, there are plenty of shots of the players staring intently at the field and swooping bird's-eye views of the stadium, but Berg pays attention to the story's harsher details, too—the "For Sale" signs planted in front of the coach's house when he loses a big game, a wrenching scene in which an African-American player breaks down after a devastating knee injury. By shooting the film in closeup, with a jittery frame and a documentary feel, Berg conveys the future-blinding intensity of small-town high-school sports, at a time when a seventeen-year-old can really believe that his life is peaking on the fifty-yard line. The cast of players includes Derek Luke, Lucas Black, and Garrett Hedlund. With Billy Bob Thornton as the coach.—*Michael Agger* (Battery Park 11, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE GRUDGE
Here's a new one: the Japanese horror film "Ju-on" gets its tepid Hollywood makeover by its *original* director, Takashi Shimizu. The movie is your standard haunted-house boilerplate, with an American exchange student in Tokyo (Sarah Michelle Gellar) out to solve the mystery. There are rattling sounds, dark shadows, and the always reliable sightings of ghosts (in this case a zombified boy). As Gellar chases the nasty demons around, people keep entering the house and the body count rises. There's no plot to speak of, and no real terror, just a collection of nicely photographed scenes.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 11, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

I ♥ HUCKABEES
David O. Russell's new satire is an authentic disaster peppered with many odd and brilliant moments. The characters, skittering along the edges of the frame, speak only about Big Ideas, quarrel at the drop of a non sequitur, and have sex in uncomfortable places. The hero, one Albert Markovski (Jason Schwartzman), is the head of an open-spaces conservation group, and he makes a deal with a rising young executive (Jude Law) at Huckabees, a superstore chain, to preserve some woods. Yet Albert, a surly little hysteric, feels lost, so he hires two "existential detectives" (Dustin Hoffman and Lily Tomlin) to find out what's wrong with him. The true existentialist, however, is Caterine Vauban (Isabelle Huppert), a sexy *philosophe* in a limo who believes that life (as it says on her business card) is "cruelty, manipulation, meaninglessness." She and Albert make love on a log. There's much more, all of it devoted to a quarrel between two philosophical viewpoints—that everything is connected and that everything is separate. With Mark Wahlberg, who is touching and funny as a fireman with nothing on his mind but petroleum. Jeff Baena worked on the garrulous screenplay with Russell.—*D.D.* (10/4/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 11, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

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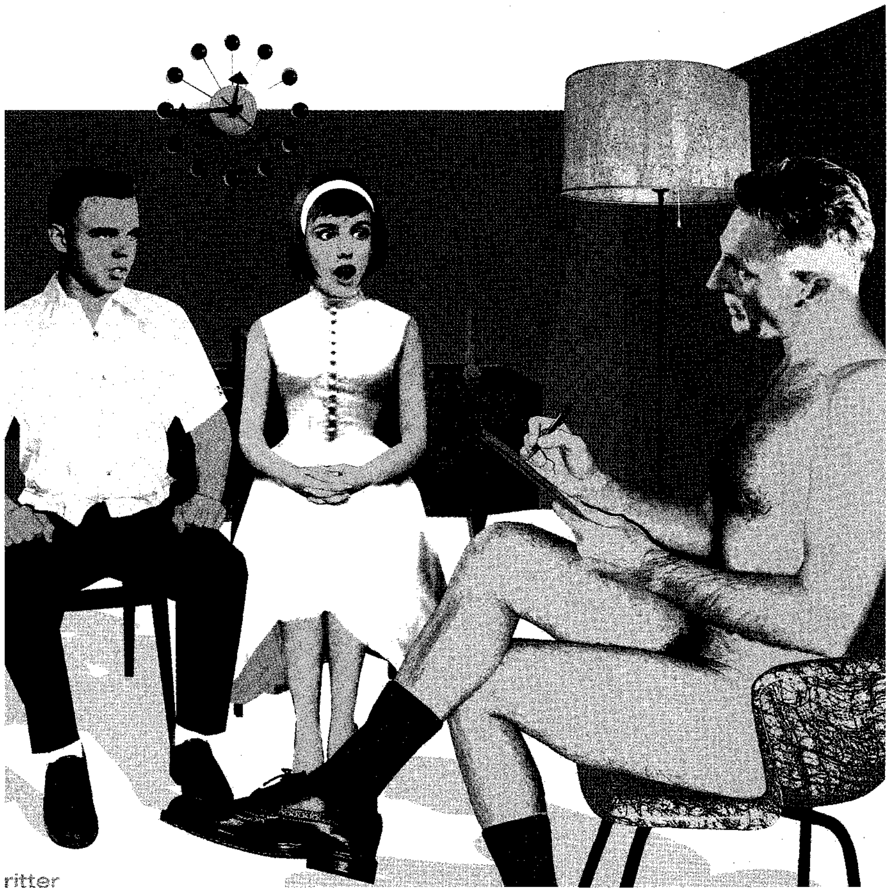
THE INCREDIBLES
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE MOTORCYCLE DIARIES
In 1952, a medical student called Ernesto Guevara de la Serna (Gael García Bernal) teamed up with his friend Alberto Granado (Rodrigo de la Serna), a biochemist, and journeyed eight thousand miles through South America. The tale of their travels is the basis for Walter Salles's ravishing, suggestive, and faintly superfluous film. Both young men are of middle-class Argentinean stock, and Ernesto has a girlfriend so rich and beautiful that her family's estate, as Alberto notes, looks like Switzerland. If he had stayed with her, Latin-American history might have taken a more placid turn; instead, Ernesto remounted his motorbike, headed into the Andes, and began the determined process of turning into Che Guevara. The film is sprinkled with gestures toward that future, especially when the two men work at a leper colony on the Amazon, but the foreshadowing doesn't always convince; the sequence in which they meet a pair of wandering Communists on the road and drink in the saga of their suffering is biographically accurate, yet it feels dramatically forced. In the end, the film might best be read as a high-class, episodic buddy picture, with the tubby, more skeptical Alberto (he's like a young Robert Donat) observing with interest the spark of indignation—and the air of chaste reticence—in his impossibly handsome pal.—*A.L.* (9/27/04) (Battery Park 11, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)



Liam Neeson in "Kinsey," a bio-pic directed by Bill Condon, opening November 12.

JOHN RITTER

P.S.
The second feature film from Dylan Kidd, who leapt to our attention with the scurrilous "Roger Dodger." The new picture stars Laura Linney as a mousy director of admissions at Columbia, who, one day, refines her selection process by having sex with a young applicant (Topher Grace). The reason for this unorthodox approach is that he shares a name with a former sweetheart of hers, now dead; as motives go, it doesn't sound that strong, and you wouldn't trust her with a phone directory, but still. The rest of the movie hovers and quavers around that initial act. The heroine's ex-husband (Gabriel Byrne) confesses to his own carnal excess, looking none too pleased about it; her best friend (Marcia Gay Harden), understandably intrigued, arrives in town and introduces the now bewildered student to her cleavage; and the kid himself stays cool, presumably wondering what these messed-up adults are so concerned about. He has a point. Kidd's film lacks the bite and nerve of its predecessor; it glides along in the service of a whiny wistfulness. As a guide to college-entrance procedures, of course, it's unsurpassed.—*A.L.* (10/18/04) (Village East Cinemas.)

RAY
Swaying from side to side, his back arched almost to the point of snapping, Jamie Foxx, as Ray Charles, seems pulled upward to the heavens and downward to the keys at the same time. This intelligent and tough-minded bio-pic, written by James L. White and Taylor Hackford and directed by Hackford, tells us a lot about Charles, but it doesn't tell us everything. Though properly awed by Charles's talent, "Ray" refuses to get chummy or possessive. The movie picks up Charles's story in the late forties, when he's an ambitious but wary teen-age musician, and carries him through his musical innovations and his personal pleasures and torments until 1964, when he's a world-famous artist and a miserable heroin addict. There's something both joyous and demonic about this guy, an insatiable energy in his insistence on driving soul and country sounds into the beats of R. & B. For many older people in the audience, the sound of Ray Charles's music is inseparable from memories of dating, dancing, lovemaking, and loss. The movie has the bold good grace to honor the enraptured kids they once were and the sterner but still hungry grownups they became.—*D.D.* (11/8/04) (Battery Park 11, Chelsea

West, First & 62nd Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

SIDEWAYS

Paul Giamatti has no chin to speak of, a round-shouldered physique, and the nervous smile of a craven dog. He's the anti-ideal of the American male, and he's making a brilliant career of it. In this wonderful new movie by the team of Alexander Payne (writer-director) and Jim Taylor (co-writer), Giamatti plays Miles, a failed novelist around forty who takes off for a winetasting tour with his buddy Jack (Thomas Haden Church), a washed-up TV actor who is about to get married. What starts as a last fling at freedom becomes for the two men—but centrally for Miles—a confrontation with middle age and stasis. Miles is a bibliophile, a cinephile, and an oenophile. Jack, however, couldn't care less—in every way, he's blissfully undiscriminating. On the road, the men meet Maya (Virginia Madsen), a divorced graduate student who works as a waitress, and Stephanie (Sandra Oh), a sexy "pour girl." The music and the camera setups are at times pedestrian, but the rest of "Sideways" is vivid and bitterly funny. A comedy poised on the edge of despair, the picture asks the question: How do you stop moving sideways? Or, more metaphorically: Won't a Cheval Blanc '61, if left too long on the shelf, begin to lose its savor?—*D.D.* (10/25/04) (Chelsea West, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

STAGE BEAUTY

Billy Crudup, with a slender waist, long lashes, and a bit of a flirtatious pucker, is Ned Kynaston, the reigning Desdemona, Ophelia, and Juliet of the early Restoration period. When the theatre-loving Charles II decrees that henceforth women shall play women, Kynaston is replaced by his dresser, Maria (Claire Danes), who imitates his stylized, Kabuki-like "female" gestures and isn't very good as a woman. Can the homosexual Kynaston play a man onstage? Or in bed? This coarse-grained semi-successor to "Shakespeare in Love" is roistering and appetitive, and the camera rushes about meaninglessly (the theatre director Richard Eyre seems to be demonstrating that he can be as "cinematic" as anyone). Crudup doesn't do badly in the role, but one feels sorry for him—people are always pulling up Kynaston's gown and reaching for his member to see if he's really a man. The movie is unconvincing and graceless, and weirdly anachronistic and overexplicit about gender issues. With Tom Wilkinson as a theatre manager and the dreadful, movie-wrecking Rupert Everett as Charles II. The American writer Jeffrey Hatcher adapted his own play.—*D.D.* (10/11/04) (Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, 62nd & Broadway, and Sunshine Cinema.)

TARNATION

"Notes from the Underground" hits the age of the iMac, and it's not a pretty sight. Jonathan Caouette is a young Texan filmmaker who was raised in dismaying, sometimes brutal, circumstances and who has now trawled through them for evidence. The result is part trip, part secret journal, spliced together into a lurid public memorandum. We learn of his mother, Renee, who, by the time she bore Jonathan, in the early nineteen-seventies, had already suffered electroshock treatment and a violent marriage. Her son was farmed out to foster parents, who maintained the cycle of harm. There is one scene in which, as a boy of eleven, he stages a plaintive drag act, and, watching it, you can barely imagine a more disturbed child; whether such disturbance makes for coherent, let alone tactful, filmmaking is another question. There are moments of graphic beauty here (Gus Van Sant, unsurprisingly, was the executive producer), but also smears of unpleasantness; if the middle-aged, once radiant Renee is now a picture of emotional damage, is it right for a loving son to trap her ravings on camera and put them on show?—*A.L.* (10/18/04) (Film Forum.)

TEAM AMERICA: WORLD POLICE

Trey Parker and Matt Stone, the unruly spirits behind the "South Park" series, return with their second feature film, a satirical extravaganza with an all-puppet cast. The puppets have large, lambent eyes, and, compared to some Hollywood stars, their faces are actually very expressive. Parker and Stone have a lot of devious fun with their helpless

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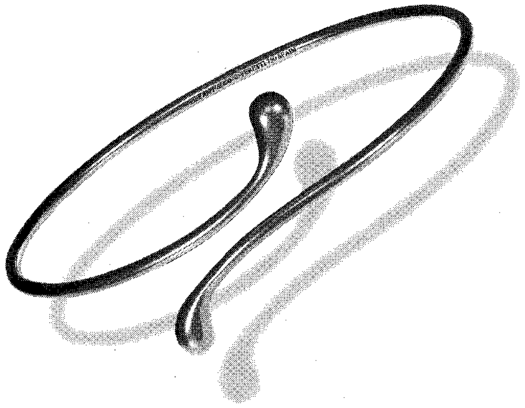

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toys: they blow them up, feed them to fish, and capture them in gymnastic moments of intimacy (this last stunt almost earned the film an NC-17 rating). The story has a team of U.S. Special Forces flying out of their base inside Mt. Rushmore to find weapons of mass destruction, a scenario that provides plenty of opportunity to send up G.I. Joe heroism, where America is always coming to save the day! Parker and Stone's recklessness has (and evokes) a certain giddiness, but this is satire via body blow. Still, the movie is hilarious, and filled with dare-you-to-laugh moments.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 11, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

VERA DRAKE

In its limited way, perfect. The title character in Mike Leigh's new movie is a middle-aged cleaning lady (Imelda Staunton) who races through her London working-class neighborhood singing to herself. The time is 1950, and though the dark and depressed city still suffers from wartime austerities Vera brings the light. The short, pudding-faced woman drops in on invalids, offers a few words of sympathy, and then makes her way to the luxurious flats of the wealthy, whose objets d'art and fireplace grills she dusts and polishes, sometimes on her knees. Vera gives of herself freely and easily, and it is precisely in that selfless and attentive way—brisk, efficient, consoling—that, using a tube and a noxious solution, she terminates one unwanted pregnancy after another. Working with an almost preternatural calm, Leigh sets up the repressive and sexually inarticulate atmosphere of the time; Vera's furtive activity is part of an entire system of shadowy reticence and embarrassed dithering. And Leigh captures, without sentimentality or condescension, the grave and stoical spirit of the English working class. The movie is hushed and intense; it evokes an entire way of life. With Phil Davis as Vera's husband, Stan. Photographed, with immaculate fidelity to a dun-colored London, by Dick Pope.—*D.D.* (10/11/04) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Cinema 2, Empire 25, and Lincoln Square.)

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Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
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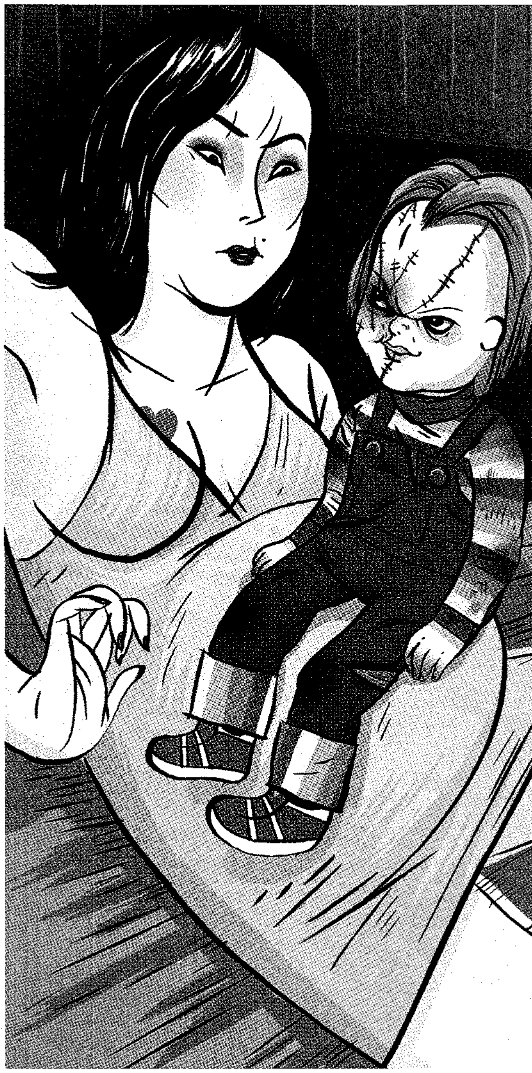
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Pioneer Theatre, 155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.



Jennifer Tilly in "Seed of Chucky."

JILLIAN TAMAKI

72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182).
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Cinema Tropical." Nov. 12 at 7:30: "Herod's Law" (2000, Luis Estrada; in Spanish). ♦ Nov. 13 at 2: A panel discussion about TV ads in the 2004 election. ♦ Repertory night. Nov. 13 at 6:30: "Late Spring" (1949, Yasujiro Ozu; in Japanese). ♦ A celebration of the Criterion Collection. Nov. 14 at 2: Panel discussion and clips. ♦ Nov. 14 at 3:30: "Brazil: Director's Cut" (1985/2004, Terry Gilliam).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5110)—Nov. 10-11: The Swiss American Film Festival. ♦ "*The Onion* Presents." Nov. 11 at 8: "Animal Factory" (2000, Steve Buscemi). ♦ Lithuanian cinema. Nov. 12 at 7:30 and Nov. 13 at 9:30: Films by Audrius Stonys and Arunas Matelis (1991-2001). ♦ Nov. 12 at 9:30 and Nov. 14 at 6:30: "Corridor" (1994, Sarunas Bartas). ♦ Nov. 13 at 7:30 and Nov. 14 at 8:30: "In Memory of a Day Gone By" (1990, Bartas) and "The Black Box" (1992, Algimantas Maceina). ♦ "Essential Cinema." Nov. 13 at 5: "Triumph of the Will" (1934-1935, Leni Riefenstahl; in German). ♦ Nov. 14 at 4:30: "Francesco, Giuliare di Dio" (1949, Roberto Rossellini; in Italian, no subtitles).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Repertory favorites. Nov. 10 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Fallen Idol" (†). ♦ A Jim Jarmusch retrospective. Nov. 11 at 7:30: "Permanent Vacation" (1980). ♦ Nov. 12 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "Stranger Than Paradise" (1983). ♦ Nov. 13 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Down by Law" (1986). ♦ Nov. 14 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Dead Man" (1995). ♦ Nov. 15 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "Mystery Train" (1989). ♦ Nov. 16 at 6 and 9: "Night on Earth" (1991).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Nov. 10-11 at 1:10, 3:15, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40: "On the Waterfront" (1954, Elia Kazan). ♦ Starting Nov. 12 at 1:30, 5:10, and 8:20: A restored version of "The Big Red One" (1980, Samuel Fuller).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL

55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through Nov. 16: "Sisters: Dorléac and Deneuve." Nov. 16 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "The Umbrellas of Cherbourg" (1964, Jacques Demy; in French).

SUNSHINE CINEMA

143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. Nov. 12-13: "South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut" (1999, Trey Parker).

THALIA THEATRE

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Through Nov. 28: "The Golden Age of Mexican Melodramas." All films are in Spanish. Nov. 13 at 6: "The Pearl" (1948, Emilio Fernández). ♦ Nov. 14 at 1: "Bugambilia" (1945, Fernández).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through Nov. 11: "Scary Movies 2: The Horror Continues." Nov. 11 at 3:30: "The Vampire and the Ballerina" (1960, Renato Polselli). ♦ Nov. 11 at 9: "Demons of the Mind" (1972, Peter Sykes). ♦ Starting Nov. 12: "The Newest Tiger: Sixty Years of South Korean Cinema." Nov. 12 at 1: "Aimless Bullet" (1961, Yu Hyonmok). ♦ Nov. 12 at 3: "To the Starry Island" (1993, Park Kwang-su). ♦ Nov. 12 at 5 and Nov. 13 at 7: "The Road Taken" (2003, Hong Ki-seon). ♦ Nov. 12 at 7 and Nov. 13 at 9: "Low Life" (2004, Im Kwon-taek). ♦ Nov. 12 at 9:20 and Nov. 13 at 5: "The Lovers in Woomuk-Baemi" (1990, Jang Sun-woo). ♦ Nov. 13 at 1 and Nov. 14 at 5:15: "Home Is Where the Heart Is" (1949, Yun Yong-gyu). ♦ Nov. 13 at 2:45: "The Housemaid" (1960, Kim Ki-young). ♦ Nov. 14 at 1: "The Hidden Hero" (1979, Im). ♦ Nov. 14 at 3: "Peppermint Candy" (2000, Lee Chang-dong). ♦ "On Set with French Cinema." Nov. 16 at 7:30: "Irma Vep" (1996, Olivier Assayas; in French), introduced by the director.

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relays Solenoids Heavy-duty miniature applicators Absorbents and dessicants Voice networks Sea plows for undersea excavation Insulators Medical electrode gels Welded steel tubing Micropatch antennas Filters Thermocouple cables Avionics Polyethylene stretch films Backplane connector systems **Aircraft wire and power cables** Lamps Conformal antennas Serving trays Battery chargers Drills Panel boards Audio receivers Wire basket cable trays Pressure vessel clamps Snow melting mats Matrix switchers Amplitude measurement equipment Salve Telephony analysis Automatic door controls Well cleaners and developers Automotive micro power relays Plastic protective sheeting Patch cable Automotive mini power relays Transmission line accessories Hazard detection products Building wraps Vending machine components Scales Intuitive LCD and CRT touchmonitors USB connectors Cable clamps Micropneumatic systems Cable ducting systems Sealants and gels Electrical metallic tubing set-screw connectors and couplings Insulation facers Call center monitoring services Relays with forcibly-guided contacts Spa controls Industrial control hybrids Gas masks Laser rangefinders Sodium bicarbonate based extinguishing agents Flame-retardant drapery systems Resuscitators for infants and children Digital watch parts Shade canopy accessories Barrier strips Chalkboards Therapeutic ultrasound PIN photo diode modules Medical monitoring services Check valves Resin systems Chemical oxygen generators All-in-one touch computers Chartering cable ships Elastic bandages Wireless systems Chillers Semiconductor heat sinks Digital audio services Automotive module relays Surface mounted cabinets Rotary switches Flame retardants Pressure seal closures Electric portable air compressors Circuit breakers Automotive quality inspection equipment Solid-state components Gas discharge tube replacements Components for camcorders Panel indicators Heat isolation devices Explosion-proof detectors Climate monitoring Hazardous material protective suits Solid-state subsystems Signal magnetics Passive electronics Medical oxygen delivery Grounding connectors Telescoping sign support systems Broadband driver amplifiers Champagne glasses Drinking bottles Polymeric and porcelain surge arrestors for distribution and transmission networks Automotive power relays Garment hangers Microcoaxial assemblies Snack food packaging Modem cable assemblies Industrial control switches Continuous-slot metal framing Landfill development Multi-mode radar Patch cable assemblies Shielded and coaxial cable slices Wine glasses Flame-retardant tape Range hoods Halogen-free cables for commercial and offshore applications Absorbable monofilament sutures Cable TV converters Terminals and connectors for underground networks Syringe dispensers Cordless telephone batteries Fire protection systems Tubing for outdoor furniture framing Sensor wraps Easels PIN diodes High-performance solid state relays and power controllers Wire harness tape Ceramic burners Electrical equipment for saunas Cylindrical control connectors Terminals and splices Security systems Relay sockets and accessories Arson detection Galvanized steel tubing Paperboard Counters and timers Sealed connectors Databus assemblies Television sets DC converters Subcutaneous sensors Pipe and tube products Electrical tape High pass filter inductors Pistol grip hand tool systems for IDCs Adhesive tape Segmentally welded pipe fittings USB cables Construction management Deactivators International mains adaptors Suction instruments Test equipment Steel box connectors Calibration equipment and services Plastic tumblers Cable trays Verified audio detection Thermoplastic piping systems Coaxial cable terminators Pigtail cable assemblies Waveguides Plastics engineering Institutional timekeeping Photocopiers Cabled and blind-mate power connectors High-performance connectors Safety relief valves Access floor modules Halogen-free wire Power systems Raised face flanges Connectors for high-voltage substations Flexible non-metallic conduit Reduced wall flexible metal conduit Catheters Medication nebulizers Digital metering systems Wiring harness sockets Automobile steering columns Pediatric monitoring equipment Cable design conductors Flame-retardant tubing for nuclear environments Rooftop walkways Digital products Air sampling equipment Voltage wheels Customized point-of-sale receipts Digital proofing Power tool switches Chokes Medical diagnostics Sound mixers Air traffic control equipment Digital visual interface products Vertical drain membranes and radiant barriers Cabinet power systems Wall track systems DIP switches Resistor protection Thermostats Electrical transformers High-performance RF/microwave antennas Lighting for public services Video cables Thermal circuit breakers Video endoscopy Cable assemblies Irrigation pipe Heat-tracing connectors Potassium bicarbonate-based extinguishing agents Megaphone components Calculators Institutional can liners Voltage-variable attenuators Wafer gear Varactors Coaxial cables Patient monitoring cables Drop cloths Alarms for hazardous areas Power splitters Chassis components Stormwater and wastewater st readers with web-based authentication Printer cable assemblies Engineering services Amusement machine components Di resuscitators Systems for offshore oil and gas installations Patch panels Airport lighting systems Soldering equipment Lo n cable systems Entry modules Microsurgical needles Cryogenic valves Wiring harness design software Automotive com ed design services Porcelain disc insulators Flex and rigid circuits Diagnostic procedure trays Inkjet fluids Diagnostic a ess te ting I ndust ape plastic sheeting Rechargeable car flashlights Memory card receptacles Spirometry systems Automatic blood pressure infusors Coated and cloth-backed building and construction tapes Power magnetics Exhausters Ultraviolet disinfection systems Moisture analysis equipment Flange gaskets with bulb elastomers Exotic alloys Professional fire department hardware Custom sterilizable cable assemblies Skin effect trace systems Dental dressings and sutures Parts for lawn and garden equipment Tape measures Flame detectors Ribbon cables Carpet backing Parallel groove clamps Graphic arts tape Extended coverage fire sprinkler heads Hand pumps Climate control monitoring Satellite radio udio systems Jacket compounds Galvanized steel armor with PVC jackets Irrigation pumps Utility cabinets Cyanoacrylat sives Large-screen video projectors Eye Arterial extension sets Paper mill wraps Fence frame Distribution panels ners Protective breathing equipment Special purpose spiral antennas Automatic pick, place and press Power switches Fiber-optic connectors Veterinary medical products Bypass valves Carbon dioxide gas transmitters Specialty chemicals Rainfall gauges Alarms for motor vehicles Water sampling and analysis Fingerprint identification Mobile security systems Cable ties Firefighting flares Multiplier diodes Fireproof cables Drum core magnetics Audio receivers Flexible exhaust connectors Isolators and circulators Magnet wire termination machines Dual hybrids Static measuring equipment Hand-held radios Cable management accessories Steam-tracing products Extrusion laminat Parking deck PVC-jacketed metal clad cable Factory automation cables Steelwork fixings Airport construction management instrument w rization Cotton balls Pipe for recreational equipment Self-adhesive cable clips Multi-pair high flexibility cables Fixed cable termination adapters Butterfly valves Portable memory Components for CD recorders and players Telemetry systems Audio production services Integrated molding/plating technology Telephone systems Safety goggles Reverse cutting sutures Decorative shields Temperature and pressure gauges Commercial-quality steel tubing Laser diodes Temperature sensors Connection droppers Dry-erase marker boards Feminine hygiene products Storage tanks Analgesics First aid kits Thermal controls Computer-assisted surgery Power modules Subminiature D connectors Front-connected sockets Digital attenuators Automated teller machine components Spring pin coax probe assemblies Control panels Wet pipe sprinkler systems Alarm verification Security keypads Pain management products Helical gears Roadway and tunnel management systems Printed circuit terminals Galvanized round signposts Rocker and paddle switches Microwave components Roof and gutter heating cables Arson detection Voice amplifiers Fall arrest systems High-voltage connectors Power entry modules Custom broadband networks Steel threadable sprinkler pipe Accounting software Ultrasound cable assemblies Protective clothing for emergency workers Flare launchers Dry pipe systems Cable tie guns Broadband amplifiers Rectangular heavy-duty connectors Discharge devices Vibration dampers Electromagnetic flow readers Laser components Advanced composites Coaxial connectors Adhesive covers Flat steel plates Elastomeric connectors Passive fiber-optic hardware Singulation systems Electrosurgical devices Coffee service kits Automotive radar sensors Electrical metallic tubing compression connectors and couplings Intercommunication devices Customized valves Dry pipe valves Flexible hoses Curing ovens Insulated ground metal clad cables Digital satellite radio antennas Perimeter door and window protection systems Anemometers Cosmetic surgery needles Flexible non-metallic conduit Supply cylinder assemblies Alarm communication systems Identification products Flexible piping equipment Rayon balls

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THE NEW YORKER

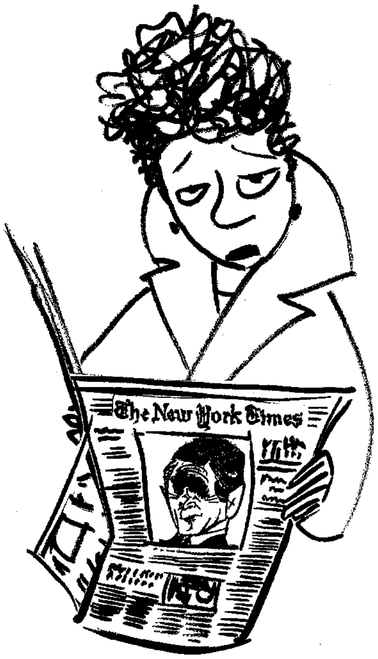
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
BLUES

Here in the bluest borough of the bluest city of the bluest state in all our red-white-and-blue American Union, it has not been a happy week. A cocktail of emotions was being felt in these parts after last week's Presidential election, and the most potent ingredient was sadness. We've got the blues, and we've got 'em bad.

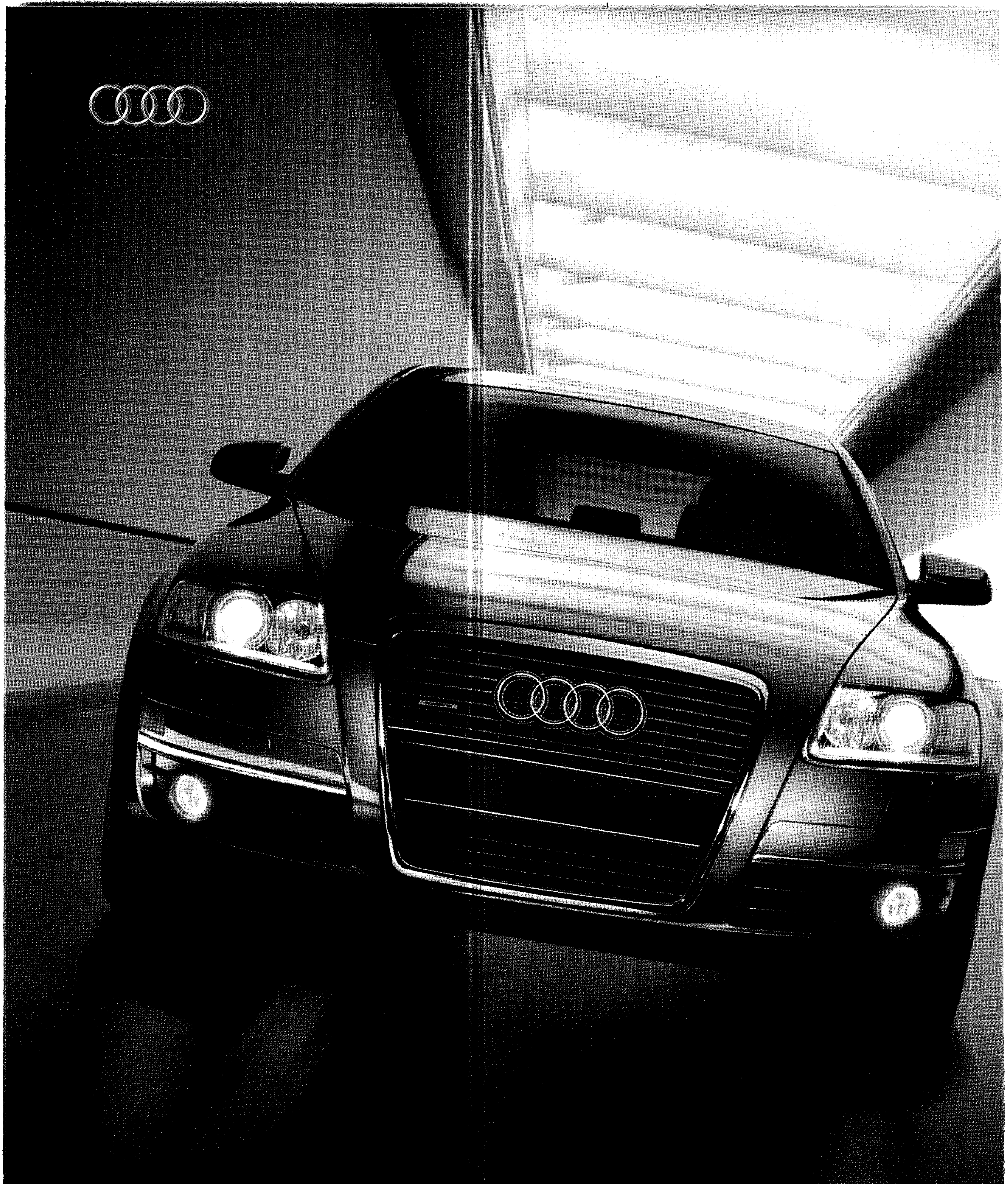
The grief that so many felt at Senator Kerry's defeat was quite unexpected, and profound enough that, for the moment at least, it held off bitterness and recrimination. On both sides, this was a campaign that vast numbers of people threw their hearts into. There was a huge volunteer outpouring for Kerry, from Bruce Springsteen and George Soros on high to the hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, who manned phone banks and travelled to "swing states" and wrote the first political checks of their lives. To be sure, something along these lines had happened before, in the campaigns of Adlai Stevenson, Eugene McCarthy, Robert Kennedy, and George McGovern on the Democratic side, and of Barry Goldwater on the Republican. But this time the scale was larger and the yearning was greater, because in contrast to the campaigns of 1952 and 1964 and 1968 and 1972, all of which had the quixotic quality of gallant but doomed struggles, the chance of victory in 2004 seemed real, especially as Election Day approached. And this time the stakes felt higher—higher than in any election for at least three decades and maybe longer.

During the campaign it was routinely remarked that the Democrats' fervor was rooted much more in anti-Bush than in pro-Kerry sentiments. That was certainly true at the beginning, when many primary voters calculated that a decorated war hero, even one from liberal Massachusetts, would be more "electable" than a volatile Vermont doctor. It was far less true at the end. Grave and formal, steady and decent, more emotionally accessible as Election Day approached, John Kerry wore well. He earned the respect of his supporters and had begun to earn their affection. (Perhaps that will protect him from the kind of scapegoating to which Al Gore was so relentlessly subjected.) All Kerry needed to become thoroughly presidential was the Presidency. His supporters risked heartbreak, and they found it.



Along with the sadness, there is puzzlement. Incumbents, especially in time of war, have a built-in advantage. But this incumbent had led the country into a war, the war in Iraq, that half the public had come to see as a mistake, and had led the country down what more than half the public saw, in pollster's shorthand, as "the wrong track." The election's outcome defies logic, and perhaps that is the point. The early analyses credited Bush's victory to religious conservatives, particularly those in the evangelical movement. In voting for Bush, as eighty per cent of them did, many of these formerly nonvoting white evangelicals are remaining true to their unworldliness. In voting for a party that wants to tax work rather than wealth, that scorns thrift, that sees the natural world not as a common inheritance but as an object of exploitation, and that equates economic inequality with economic vitality, they have voted against their own material (and, some might imagine, spiritual) well-being. The moral

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL



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> the expected
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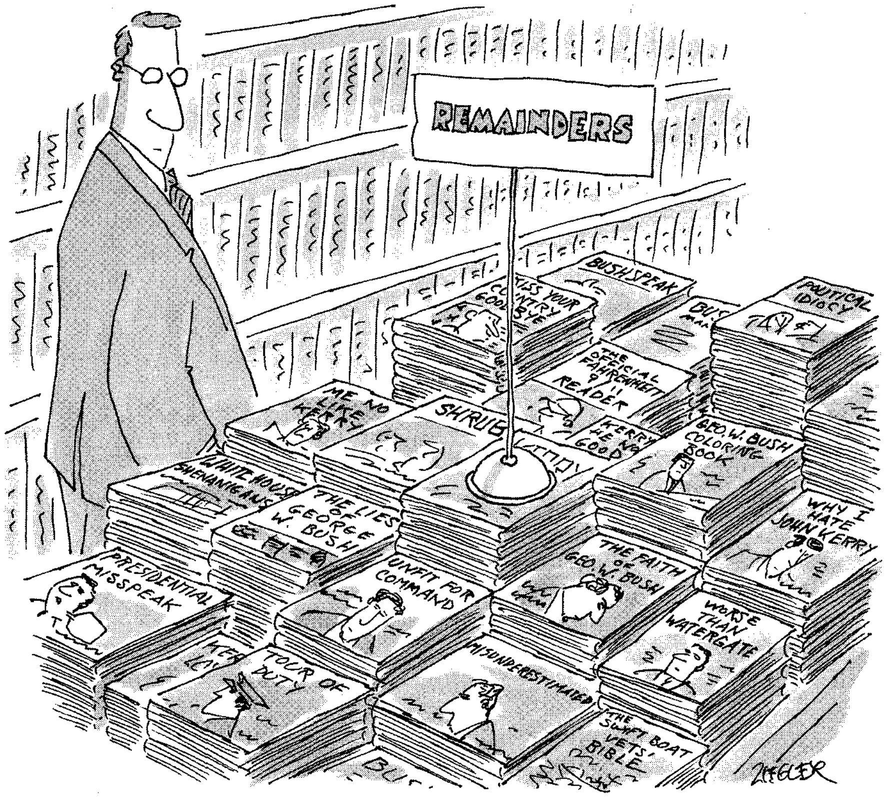
values that stirred them seem not to encompass botched wars or economic injustices or environmental depredations; rather, moral values are about sexual behavior and its various manifestations and outcomes, about family structures, and about a particularly demonstrative brand of religious piety. What was important to these voters, it appears, was not Bush's public record but what they conceived to be his private soul. He is a good Christian, so his policy failures are forgivable. He is a saved sinner, so the dissipations of his early and middle years are not tokens of a weak character but testaments to the transformative power of his faith. He relies on God for guidance, so his intellectual laziness is not a danger.

What people on what might be called the cultural blue side, which includes many who voted for Bush, find deeply unsettling about him is not his religious faith—he is hardly the first devout President—but the way he speaks of making decisions with his gut, which, he has often suggested, takes its direction from God. In his second term, given the validation he received on Election Day, he is likely to be more confident—in himself, in his "instincts," and in Almighty Gut. He will be less inclined than ever to listen to his earthly father, or to his earthly father's earthly surrogates, such as Colin Powell.

Along with the sadness and the puzzlement, there is apprehension. Here in the big coastal cities, we have reason to fear for the immediate safety of our lives and our families—more reason, it must be said, than have the residents of the "heartland," to which the per-capita bulk of "homeland security" resources, along with extra electoral votes, are distributed. It was deep-blue New York (which went three to one for Kerry) and deep-blue Washington, D.C. (nine to one Kerry), that were, and presumably remain, Al Qaeda's targets of choice. In the heartland, it is claimed, some view the coastal cities as faintly un-American. The terrorists do not agree. They see us as the very essence—the heart, if you like—of America. And, difficult as it may be for some rural gun owners to appreciate, many of us sincerely believe that President Bush's policies have put us in greater peril than we would be facing under a Kerry (or a Gore) Administration. There is apprehension that the well-documented failure to devote adequate resources to the protection of our cities, seaports, and airports will not be remedied. There is apprehension that the colossal incompetence and bad judgment—accompanied by ideological hubris, diplomatic arrogance, and an eagerness to ignore or suppress inconvenient evidence—that have tied up our military might in the knots of Iraq will, having been rewarded at the polls, continue. There is apprehension that the anti-Bush sentiments that are manifest throughout much of the world will now transmute into fully fledged anti-Americanism. The governments of our estranged European allies, led by reality-based statesmen, will do their best to accommodate the practical fact of a second Bush term. But these are, after all, democratic countries, and their publics may not be so patient or so sensible.



And there is apprehension about where this Administration will try to take our society. In his victory statement on Wednesday Bush spoke of "a new opportunity to reach out to the whole nation." By Thursday, at his post-election press conference, this had been modified to "I'll reach out to everyone who shares our goals." One of those goals is to revamp the tax system in ways that would shift the burden further downward, including the permanent abolition of the inheritance tax. Another is to privatize part of Social Security, which by definition would mean a reduction in guaranteed benefits for future retirees. Achieving the first of these goals would impose the pitiless culture of winners and losers on the beginning of life; achieving the second would impose it on life's end. Together they would constitute a fundamental revocation of an American social contract that was hammered out seventy years ago during the New Deal.

In Thursday's *Times*, a front-page news analysis argued that "it is impossible to read President Bush's reëlection with larger Republican majorities in both houses of Congress as anything other than the clearest confirmation yet that this is a center-right country—divided yes, but with an undisputed majority united behind his leadership." That is certainly true in institutional terms. But it is not true in terms of people, of actual human beings. Though the Republicans won nineteen of the thirty-four Senate seats that were up for grabs last Tuesday, for a gain of four, the number of voters who cast their ballots for Republican Senate candidates was 37.9 million, while 41.3 million voted for Democrats—almost exactly Bush's popular-vote margin over Kerry. When the new Congress convenes in January, its fifty-five Republicans will be there on account of the votes of 57.6 million people, while the forty-four Democrats and one independent will be there on account of the votes of 59.6 million people. As for the House, it is much harder to aggregate vote totals meaningfully, because so many seats are uncontested. But the Republicans' gain of four seats was due entirely to Tom DeLay's precedent-breaking re-gerrymandering of the Texas district lines.

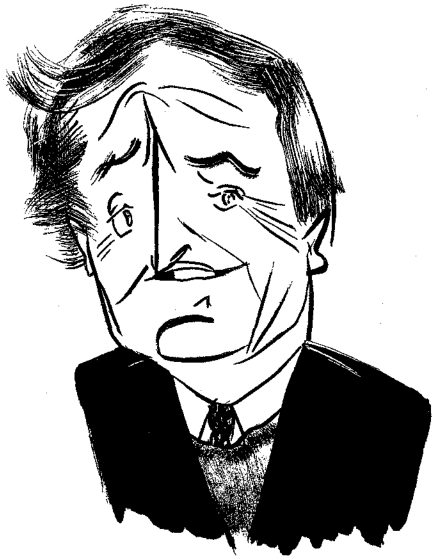
The red-blue split has not changed since 2000. This is not a center-right country. It is a center-right country and a center-left country, but the center has not held. The winner-take-all aspects of our system have converged into a perfect storm that has given virtually all the political power to the right; conservative Republicans will now control the Presidency, the House of Representatives, and the Senate so firmly that the Supreme Court, which is also in conservative hands, has abruptly become the most moderate of the four centers of federal power. The system of checks and balances has broken down, but the country remains divided—right down the nonexistent, powerless middle.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

THE PARTY DEBOUCHING

The driving directions to the Buckley residence overlooking Long Island Sound, in Stamford, include a caveat—the Buckleys being Yale people—for those travelling from New Haven: "You will need to turn left on debouching from I-95." It's a small, slightly anachronistic touch, and one that illustrates nicely the contrast between the mannered, Blue State conservatism of the author, William F., and the gruff, Red State conservatism of the recently reëlected President, George W., another Yale man.

Make no mistake: despite his public misgivings about the Iraq endeavor, and about the growth of (big-"G") government during the current term, Buckley was for Bush. Now seventy-eight and in the retirement phase of his career (he recently relinquished his ownership stake in *National Review*, the opinion journal that he founded in 1955), Buckley was in Manhattan on Election Night to host a small gathering—"the people who were there are well renowned and disparate"—at his East Seventy-third Street town house, as he has every four years for a few decades. Bob Silvers, the co-editor of *The New York Review of Books*, attended, as did Tom Wolfe and Henry Kissinger.



William F. Buckley

"Last time around, of course, there was a lot of equivocal business, and I finally forced people to leave at around one," Buckley recalled last Wednesday. "Yesterday—I've been kind of sick, so I went to bed around eleven-thirty," he said. "Most people went home by midnight."

It was dusk, and Buckley had just recently returned to Stamford, after filing his syndicated column, in which he speculated that the next election might be his last. He had dropped by his study—a converted garage cluttered with books and memorabilia ("William F. Buckley, Justice of the Peace")—to participate gamely in a call-in radio show, and to work on a book review about Isabel Paterson. ("You'll have no reason to know who she is, but it's interesting: she was one of three women—the others are Rose Wilder Lane and Ayn Rand—who published libertarian books in 1943.") Such is his retirement.

Now, at last, there was a moment for reflection—cocktails—and he began leading the way to the house, accompanied by his Cavalier King Charles spaniels, Sebby and Lizzie. "Careful—watch your step now," he said. "Let's go sit in the music room. Now, what will you have from the bar?"

Fifty years ago, when Buckley was just starting out, it would have been nearly impossible to imagine the current state of American politics: solid Republican majorities in the House and the Senate, majority Republican governorships, a two-term conservative-Republican President. The South then was still largely Democratic; the great Blue/Red divide had not hardened so firmly. Roe had not yet met Wade. Buckley, through it all, has maintained a broad, largely unaffected, historical perspective.

"I do feel disconnected, but I always have," he said, sitting down with a Scotch. "Here's an example. The first election party I sat in, I was at the faculty club of Yale, to which I was invited by Professor Willmoore Kendall. And this was nineteen hundred and forty-eight, and there were twenty-three faculty members in political science. They'd done a straw poll, Truman or Dewey: twenty-three Truman, zero Dewey. My point is that the orientation of the politics in the Northeast in those days was understood."

Sebby, as if beckoned by the clinking of ice cubes, had climbed up on the sofa. "I'm dying to read the press in Great Britain," Buckley continued, stifling a laugh. "They must just be collapsing." (Sure enough, Thursday's edition of the *Daily Mirror* led with the headline "HOW CAN 59,054,087 PEOPLE BE SO DUMB?") "I remember 1952. All Great Britain was astonished that Adlai Stevenson didn't win the election. They couldn't believe it—they found him such an agreeable character."

Buckley doesn't necessarily find the current President to be an agreeable character. "The non-combativeness of Bush in terms of the matter of congressional extravagance is an aspect of acquiescence of a political figure utterly engrossed in the Iraq business," he said. "Yes, the kind of consolidation of a thoughtful conservatism that might have happened if he'd lost isn't going to happen on account of his winning."

He seemed concerned about the future leadership of the Republican Party, and said, "Nobody has been thought of as an august contender for the Presidency four years from now—or have they been?" How about Rudy Giuliani? "Well, I suppose so, yes." Pataki? "No, he's epicene." Bill Frist? "I'm told that he's actually quite colorful if you dig deep enough, which I haven't done. He apparently *wants* to be President, somebody told me."

This, in turn, led to his recalling another old story, and another handful of ice cubes dropped into the glass. "You know, Nixon once told me—I had very few meetings with Nixon, but I had some, and in this particular meeting there was a question of which of three people were being considered to run for Vice-President two years hence—'Let me tell you something, Bill, everybody wants to be Vice-President!' I thought that was so disarmingly bright. And, of course, that was absolutely proved when Nelson Rockefeller accepted it, which was sort of demeaning, given his background. I'm going to have one more Scotch—will you join me?"

Buckley has given up his beloved sailboat, Patito, in recognition of his own mortality. "I sold it to Roger Kimball, the managing editor of *The New Criterion*, and it's just perfect," he explained, gazing out the window, where it was now too dark to glimpse the Sound. "He's a neighbor, we go to church every Sunday together—Latin Mass—and then we come here, and his wife and I play the piano together. She's a fine musician."

Turning back to politics once more, he said, "The liberals did very well by the metaphor of the slippery slope applied to civil liberties. They pretty well persuaded you that if you outlawed 'Deep Throat' you'd be outlawing Joyce. I always thought that was an intellectually defective argument. What was not defective was the success. Said I, 'Why not apply the success of that metaphor to taxation?' " A woman knocked and entered, carrying a bottle each of red and white wine: dinnertime was near. Buckley responded to her in Spanish, then began pouring a glass. "Government is now 20.9 per cent of G.D.P., and that's bad stuff," he said. "Drink to that!"

—*Ben McGrath*

WORLD OF TOMORROW
WHAT IF?

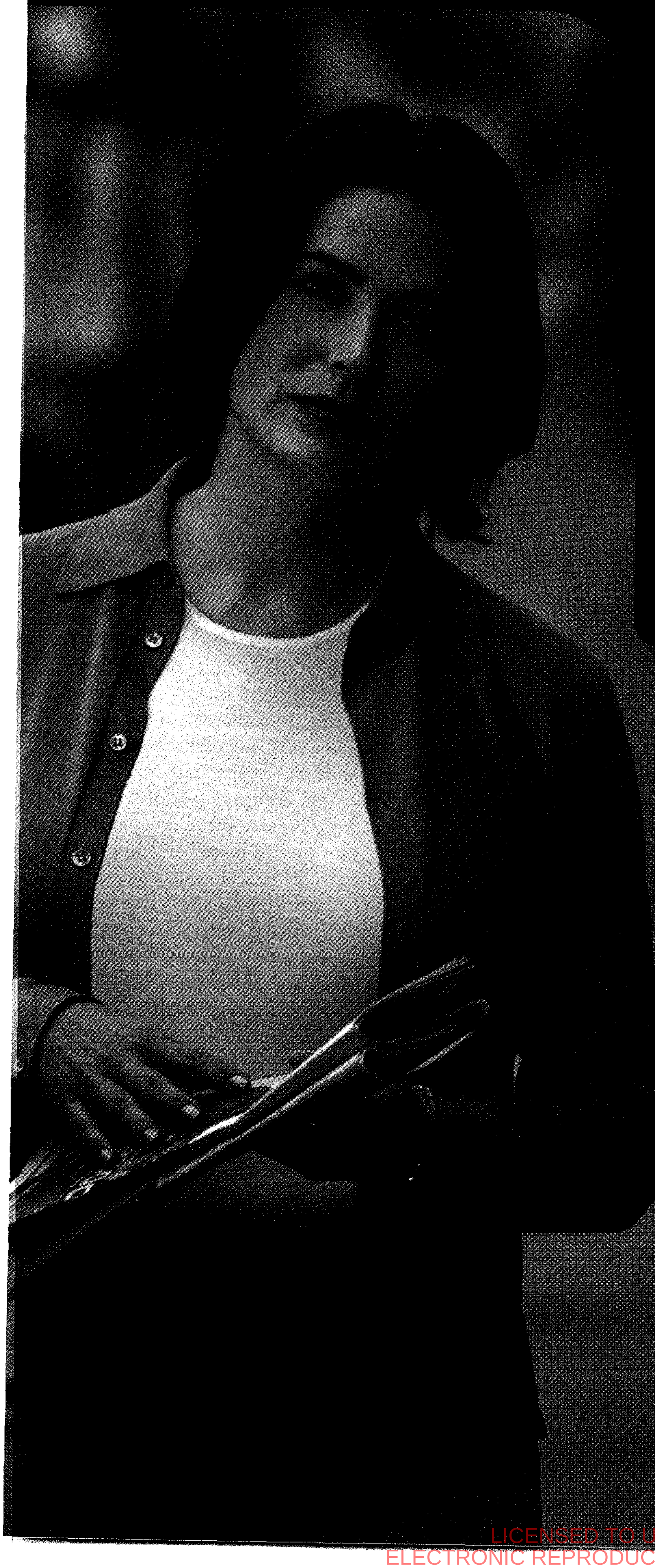
For the past several years, Robert Max Jackson, a professor of sociology at N.Y.U., has taught a freshman honors seminar called "What If? The Art and Science of Imagining a Society That Never Was," in which he poses a series of outlandish questions—what if we could live for hundreds of years? what if a device were invented that would tell you conclusively when someone was lying?—and assigns the science-fiction novels of Isaac Asimov and Ursula K. LeGuin. Jackson, who describes himself as "well left of liberal," likes science fiction because it represents "an effort by someone to alter the rules of life and the social order and then to try to make it make sense." He understands that this can have sinister applications. "I would say that we live in a world where a group of conservatives within the Republican Party would like to do that," he says.

Two weeks ago, when the possibility of an alternate, Bushless universe had not yet been extinguished, he encouraged the class to read several predictive studies of the polls. There was one by a Princeton professor that showed John Kerry winning the electoral college 311 votes to 227, and beating George W. Bush in every battleground state; another which calculated that Kerry had an 87.7-per-cent chance of winning; and an article from the blog Daily Kos about the undecided vote, which was followed by a string of comments, such as "Many Republicans who tell pollsters that they're voting for Bush actually won't." But, by the time Jackson's seminar met last Wednesday, the question of "What if?" had drifted from what might yet be to what could have been, and some of his disappointed liberal students had decided that the class was meant to be "a political fantasy about the breakdown of government."

It was in this anarchic spirit that Yuliya Bulba, an eighteen-year-old button-wearing Kerry supporter from Queens, persuaded Jackson to let the class out a half hour early so that everyone could watch Kerry's concession speech. Bulba and six of her classmates repaired to the campus student center, where they planted themselves in front of a plasma-screen television that was tuned to CNN. The mood in the common room was expectant, morose, and bored. An image of Bush laughing contentedly inspired a sophomore boy to wad up balls of napkin and pitch them at the screen. ("I know he feels it!") To pass the time, the "What If?" students traded Election Night horror stories. "I live at home, and both of my parents voted Republican," Bulba said. "I closed my door and didn't come out till morning." She mournfully dipped a French fry in ketchup and dragged it to her mouth. "When they declared Ohio on NBC, I couldn't move for, like, two hours," another student said. Katelyn Lahr, however, cultivated a detached air. She is a D.C. conservative, and had decided not to vote: "I didn't really care for the election. I was kind of fed up with everybody's passion."

At two o'clock, John Edwards took the podium and, in time-honored fashion, reminded everyone that the fight had only just begun. "Isn't it ending?" asked Shawne Ashton, a Bush supporter with a pert nose and sleek brown hair. Bulba didn't answer, and a few minutes later, when Ashton offered a criticism of Kerry's speech, Bulba had only one thing to say: "Nuc-u-lar." But Kerry's forced cheer rubbed her wrong: " 'You lift me up'—what is this, a song?" she said. And when he said, "America always moves forward," she winced and gave a sad little laugh. "I miss the Clintons," someone said. "I miss Howard Dean," someone else said. ("Why did I come to such a liberal school?" Ashton said.) "Professor Jackson brought up all these statistics that showed Kerry way ahead," one student said resentfully. "He was surprised that people thought Bush would win." Eric Klein said that he was going home to watch Barack Obama's debates with his rival, Alan Keyes, to cheer himself up. Otherwise, there was always television. "Look to 'The West Wing,' " Klein said, brightening momentarily at the thought of President Bartlet. "Although there's a rumor that they've got a Republican coming into office, too."

—*Dana Goodyear*



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THE FINANCIAL PAGE
THE RISK SOCIETY

George W. Bush was reëlected last Tuesday not because of the job he did running the economy in his first term but in spite of it. (Voters for whom the economy was the most important issue voted for Kerry by a four-to-one margin.) Bush doesn't get to coast for the next four years, though; he's facing a host of economic problems, particularly the mounting cost of health care and the looming crisis in funding for Social Security and Medicare. Bush, of course, has a master plan: he intends to turn America into what he calls an ownership society.

That sounds unobjectionable—who's against ownership? But what the President has in mind is nothing less than a radical overhaul of America's entire system of social insurance. In place of unwieldy government programs run by busybody bureaucrats, Bush wants Americans to have more independence and more choices regarding their health care, their savings, and their retirement. Social Security would be partially privatized, with people allowed to put aside money in individual accounts. Private health-insurance plans would compete with Medicare. Tax-free retirement accounts would be expanded. And health savings accounts would let people save money for health-care expenses tax-free, as long as they agreed to sign up for plans with high deductibles. The result, Bush claimed earlier this year, would be "greater opportunity, more freedom, and more control over your own life." And with freedom, presumably, will come greater responsibility; people will be more careful as users of health care, more diligent as savers and investors.

Fair enough. All things being equal, letting people make decisions for themselves will produce smarter outcomes, collectively, than relying on government planners. It may also promote attentiveness. As the economist Lawrence Summers has said, "No one in the history of the world has ever washed a rented car."

No one in the history of the world has ever had a free lunch, either. The ownership society promises freedom, but at the price of a huge shift in risk, away from government and society and onto individual citizens. Social Security, Medicare, insurance—these are basically collective risk-sharing mechanisms. Rather than let each person run the risk of ending up destitute or sick, these programs pool the risk. Because the risk is shared, it can be managed, and people can be guaranteed a minimally acceptable outcome. In Bush's brave new world, that guarantee will be eliminated.

This is what has happened as 401(k) plans have replaced traditional pension plans. With a 401(k), you have a lot more control over your financial life. You, not a pension-fund manager, decide how much to save and what to invest in. For some people, this shift has been a great boon, and it has made it easier for workers to change jobs without relinquishing retirement money. But for others (like those who staked their retirements on Enron and Pets.com) it has been a disaster. With a traditional pension, the company (or the government, in cases where the company fails) bears the burden of providing for the retirement of its employees. With a 401(k), the burden falls on the individual alone. If you screw it up, that's your problem. Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose.

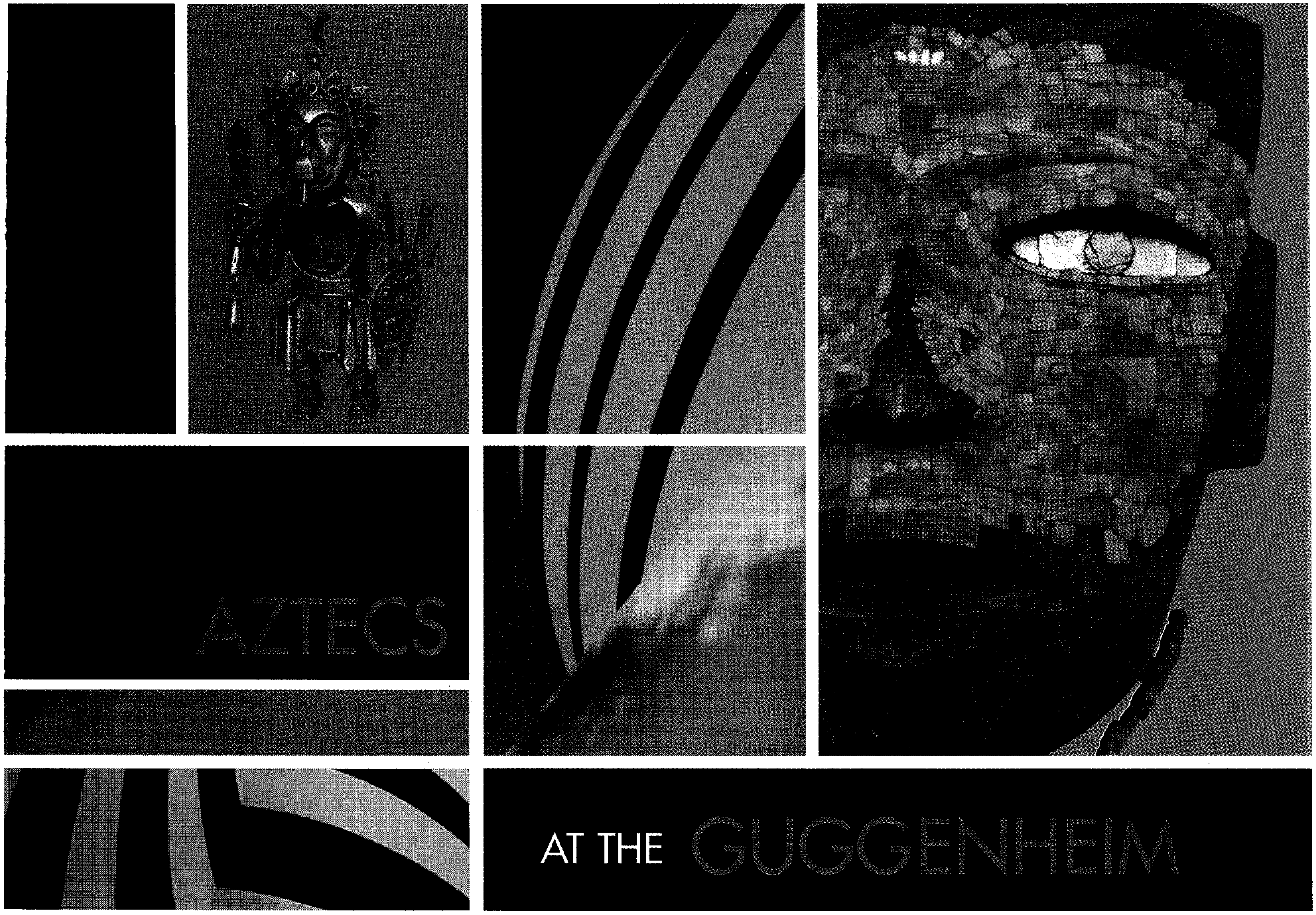
CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

Generally, we want people to reap the benefits of their own successes and pay a price for their failures. But Social Security and Medicare are designed to protect people from things they have little control over—risk of illness, risk of macroeconomic change, risk of industrial obsolescence. To manage that kind of risk, you have to do it collectively. What's more, as the political scientist Jacob Hacker has pointed out, Americans' everyday lives are considerably riskier than they used to be. Jobs are less secure. Health-care costs are increasingly difficult to plan for. And the pace of technological change—which can lay waste to entire industries almost overnight—is faster than ever. So now may not be the best time to undermine the few programs that provide people with some protection against bad decisions and bad luck.

As for choice, behavorial economists will tell you that it is possible to have too much of a good thing. A plethora of choices can be paralyzing, as Barry Schwartz pointed out in his recent book "The Paradox of Choice." Ask shoppers in a supermarket to taste six different jams, and odds are that they'll buy the jam they like best. Offer them twenty-four different jams, and odds are they'll walk away without buying any. Studies of 401(k)s show that the more investment choices a plan offers, the less likely people are to participate in it. In this regard, Social Security's lack of flexibility may actually be a virtue. People sacrifice some upside, in exchange for peace of mind.

The ownership society's greatest flaw, however, is that it won't solve the problems it purports to address. A real solution would require facing up to some thorny issues—raising the retirement age, slowing the growth of benefits, means-testing. By advocating greater freedom and independence, while failing to explain or account for the greater risk, Bush is setting Americans up for an unpleasant surprise. If his plans are implemented, a lot of people are going to end up a lot poorer in their old age than they otherwise would have been. (A lot of people will end up a lot richer, too.) The result would be Social Security without the security part. Freedom of choice is a beautiful thing. But the Bush plan is asking you to swap an insurance policy for a lottery ticket.

—*James Surowiecki*

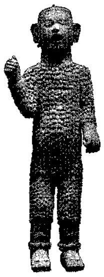


AZTECS AT THE GUGGENHEIM

A LOST CULTURE COMES TO LIFE

COVER LEFT TO RIGHT: CAST ALLOY FIGURE OF A WARRIOR, CA. 1325 © THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART; DETAIL OF STONE, TURQUOISE, OBSIDIAN AND SHELL ANTHROPOMORPHIC TEOTIHUACÁN MASK, CA. 450, MUSEO NACIONAL DE ANTROPOLOGÍA, MEXICO CITY; BELOW: FIRED CLAY AND PIGMENT AZTEC XIPE TOTEC, CA. 1500, MUSEO REGIONAL DE PUEBLA, INAH. ALL EXHIBITION PHOTOS BY MICHEL ZABÉ, ASSISTANT ENRIQUE MACIAS; GUGGENHEIM ROTUNDA DETAILS © CORBIS

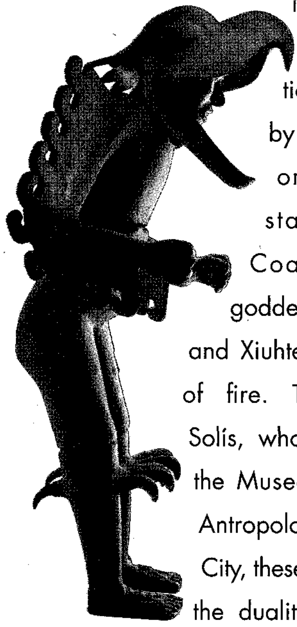
This fall, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum presents the most comprehensive exhibition ever devoted to one of the world's great vanished civilizations: the Aztecs, who ruled Central Mexico from 1325–1521 A.D. For most people, "The Aztec Empire" (through February 13, 2005) will be a revelation. The exhibition boasts a treasure trove of sensational archeological discoveries never before seen in the U.S.—more than 450 objects, including life-size terra-cotta figures only recently discovered and the largest array of Aztec gold work ever shown outside Mexico. It also provides a window into a civilization that equaled, or even surpassed, many of the contemporaneous societies of Renaissance Europe.



Five hundred years ago, the city of Tenochtitlán—modern-day Mexico City—was a thriving metropolis of more than a hundred thousand people. The Templo Mayor ("great temple") of Tenochtitlán was at the center of a sumptuously appointed district, from which the empire's authority reached as far south as today's Guatemala border, and touched both the Pacific and Caribbean coasts. As powerful as the Aztec empire was at its height, only two years after the arrival in 1519 of a militaristic adventurer named Hernán Cortés and his expeditionary force, Tenochtitlán was in ruins and the bonds holding together the empire had been broken. While the Spaniards proved superior to the Aztecs militarily, they also revealed a ruthless instinct to literally bury Aztec culture and religion and replace it with their own.

So successful were Cortés and his followers that the ruins of the great Templo Mayor—built by nine successive Aztec rulers—lay hidden until 1978, when electrical workers from the municipal light and power company happened across a major Aztec relief sculpture and excavations of the Templo Mayor commenced. They would continue at full force for five years, and result in scores of stupendous discoveries that have added immeasurably to our understanding of the religious, governmental, and artistic achievement of the Aztecs.

A WEALTH OF OBJECTS

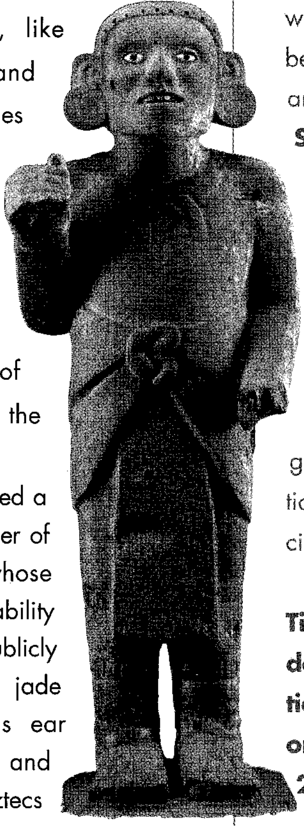


The curator of the exhibition, Felipe Solís, has conceived it as a series of twelve interconnected thematic sections introduced by a pair of extraordinary stone statues depicting Coatlicue, the goddess of the earth, and Xiuhtecuhtli, the god of fire. Together, says Solís, who is director of the Museo National de Antropología in Mexico City, these gods represent the duality of masculine and feminine attributes in the Aztec belief system, while also exemplifying the highly developed, international aesthetic style that emerged at the court of Tenochtitlán.

TOP: FIRED CLAY, STUCCO, AND PIGMENT AZTEC EAGLE WARRIOR, CA. 1440-69, MUSEO NACIONAL DE ANTROPOLOGIA (INAH), MEXICO CITY; LEFT: STONE, SHELL, AND OBSIDIAN AZTEC XIUHTECUHTLI, CA. 1500, INAH; DETAIL © CORBIS

The highlights of the exhibition are many. One showstopper is the magnificent "Eagle Warrior," a life-size, fired-clay figure dating from the mid-1400s, discovered at the temple. This figure of a brave young man whose head is visible within a mask has an immediacy and naturalism that create an instant connection with audiences today. Another life-size figure discovered at the Templo Mayor, depicting Mictlantecuhtli, the god of death and darkness, is far more grotesque, with enormous claws for hands, and his torso stripped of flesh so that a giant liver, thought to house the soul, emerges from his abdominal cavity.

Much of the art on view in this exhibition depicts the main deities that the Aztecs and their forebears worshiped, a group that included Quetzalcóatl, the creator serpent; Huitzilopochtli, the patron of war; and Tlaloc, the god of rain. But the show also reflects many other aspects of the Aztec world, such as the natural environment that surrounded them. Figures of animals abound—stunning depictions of rattlesnakes, eagles, coyotes, jaguars, dogs, as well as humbler creatures, like snails, locusts, and grasshoppers. Images of men and women reflect the ideals of beauty at the time, while objects of daily life help to conjure the milieu of both the nobles and the common people.



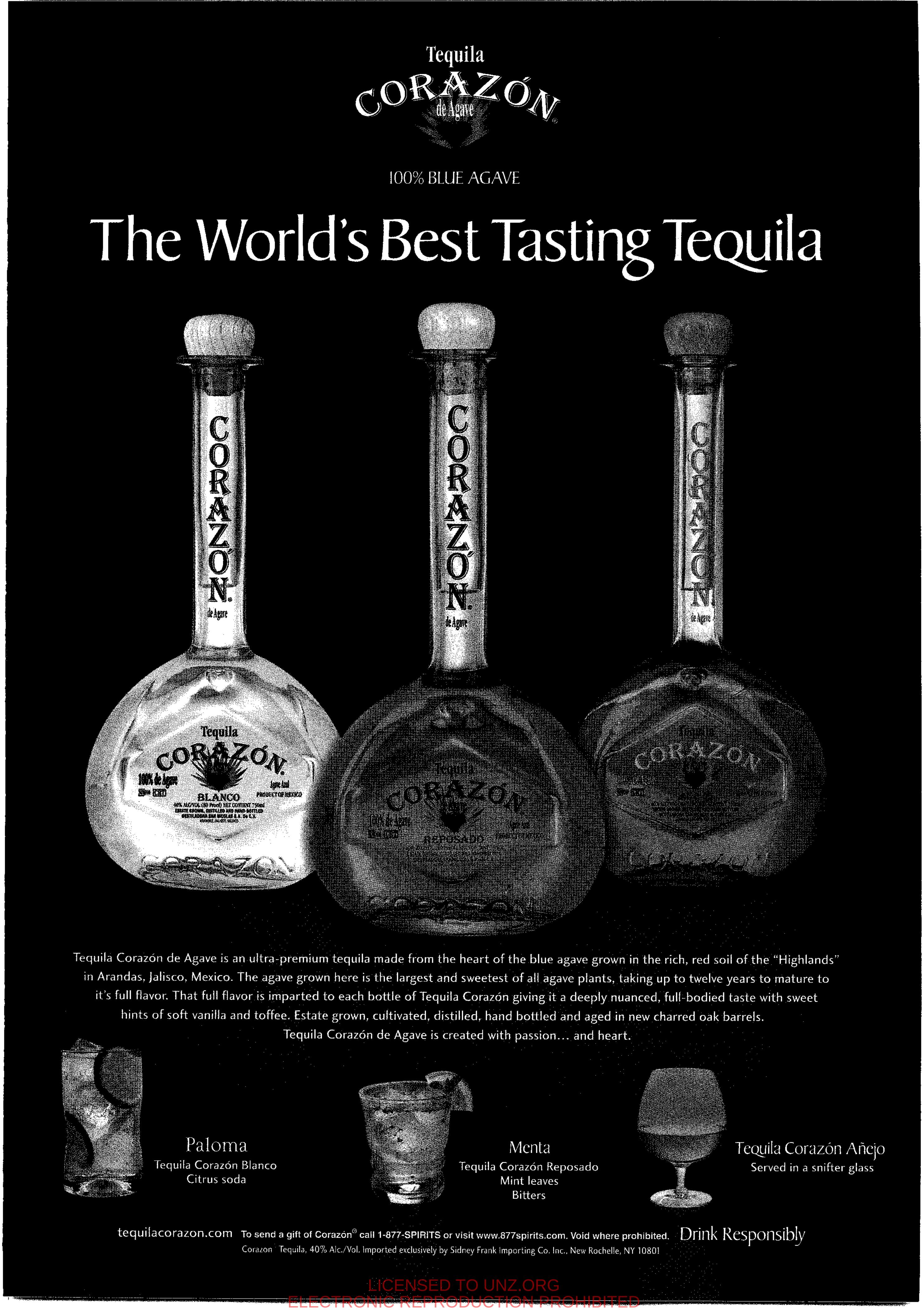
The nobility included a relatively small number of people, among whose privileges were the ability to possess and publicly display jewelry of jade and gold, such as ear spools, necklaces, and rings. After the Aztecs

BONUS PROGRAM SERIES

In conjunction with "The Aztec Empire," a series of entertaining programs is being offered at the Guggenheim Museum. On **Wednesday, November 10th, at 6:30 P.M.**, artist **Carlos Amorales** discusses how he transforms traditional and popular Mexican iconography through a process that blurs the lines between performance, art installation, political action, and popular events.

On **Saturday, November 13th, at 7 P.M.**, one of Mexico's preëminent and most innovative performers, **Jesusa Rodríguez**, presents a satirical "Pre-Columbian cabaret" in which she establishes a parallel between the story of the Aztec empire and life in the U.S. today. And on **Saturday, November 20th, at 7 P.M.**, **Guillermo Gómez-Peña** presents "From Aztec to High Tech." Described by critics as a "Chicano cyber-punk" performer, Gómez-Peña uses multilingual humor and hybrid literary genres to explore the fear of immigration, the dark side of globalization, the digital divide, and interracial sexuality, among other topics.

Tickets are available at the door as space allows. Advance tickets are sold at the museum, or by calling the box office at 212-423-3587



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FIRED CLAY AZTEC TLALOC POT, CA. 1440–69, MUSEO DEL TEMPLO MAYOR, INAH, MEXICO CITY

subjugated the provinces of the Mixtec region, where delicate work in turquoise and gold reached its zenith in Mesoamerica, the objects created by the craftsmen there became available to the nobles back in Tenochtitlán. The common people had to make do with objects of clay and clothing made of henequen. Clay figurines and ceramic vessels manufactured for daily use are included in the exhibition, in order to suggest life as it was lived by the vast majority of people at the time—the artisans, traders, and farmers who inhabited the Valley of Mexico.

A LIVING LEGACY

Modern-day Mexico owes much to the Aztecs. To begin with, the country's very name is a variant of the name the Aztecs used to identify themselves—the Mexica. As any visitor to Mexico's wealth of archeological sites knows, the people who populated this land five centuries and more ago were highly accomplished architects and engineers.

Of perhaps even greater influence is the role the Aztecs played in the history of chocolate. The Aztec nobility were inveterate drinkers of a thick, bitter beverage made from cocoa beans, corn flour, and spices. And while the destruction the conquistadors wreaked is lamentable, it was due to Spain's interest in the savory concoction that chocolate came to the attention of Europe, and later the world.

Through the vast sweep of this exhibition, visitors can easily gain a sense of the grand accomplishments this lost civilization realized. And just as they revered the objects and beliefs of their forebears, we can appreciate the skill and virtuosity of the Aztec artists, and recognize the intensity and complexity that underlay their unique world view.

For more information about the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and "The Aztec Empire" exhibition, call 212-423-3500 or visit www.guggenheim.org/aztecs.

Fragment of an anthropomorphic brazier, Aztec, ca. 1300, fired clay and pigment, 18 x 22 x 9 cm, Museo Universitario de Ciencias y Arte (UNAM), Mexico City. Photo: Michel Zabé, assistant Enrique Macías.

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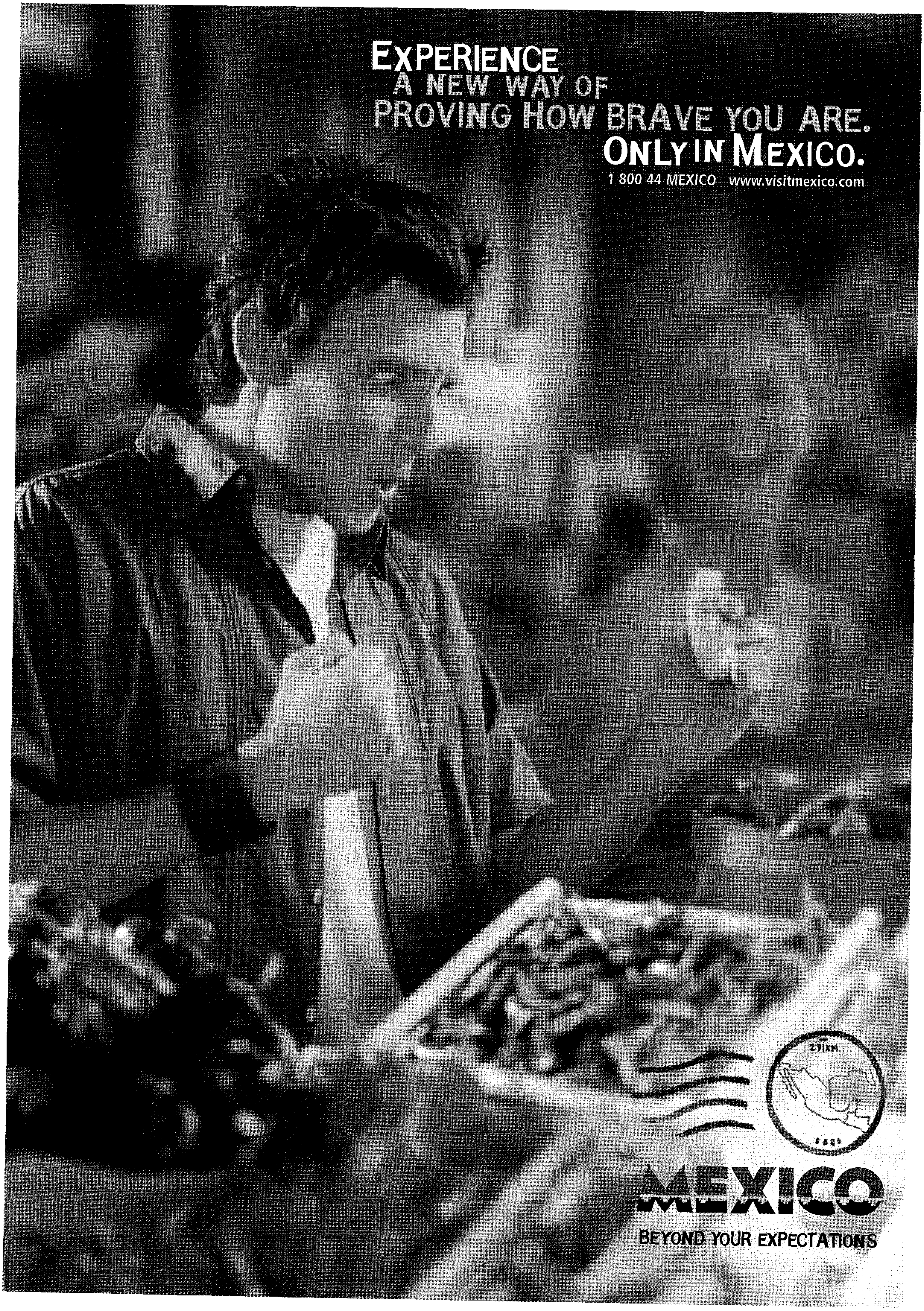
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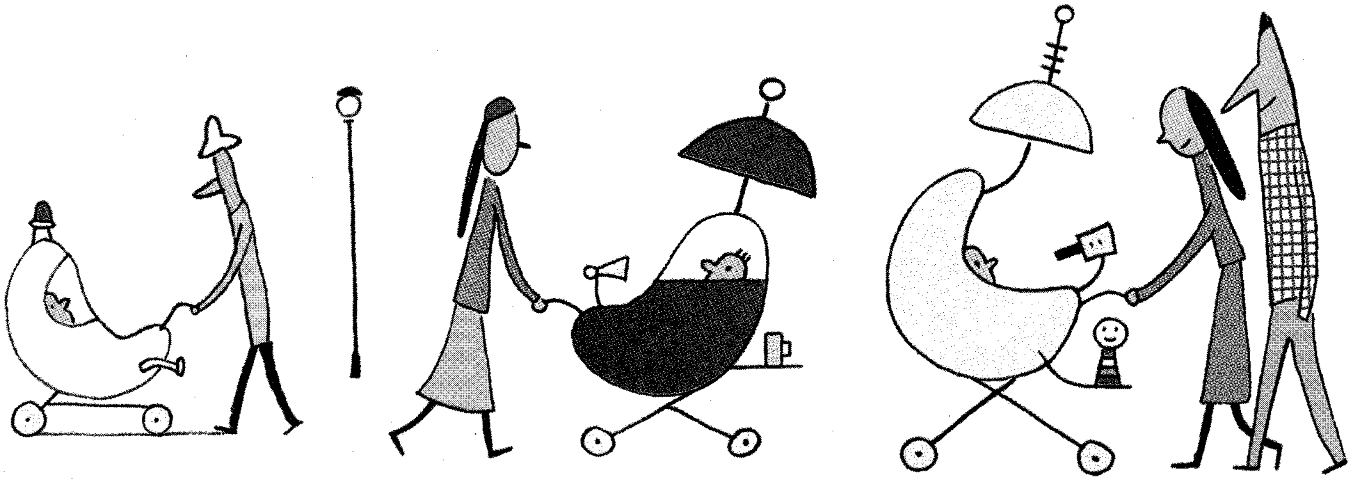
ANNALS OF RETAIL

BRINGING UP BABY

Parents spend billions to keep their children safe and happy.

BY CAITLIN FLANAGAN

When Jean-Marie Maier, of Sunrise, Florida, suspected that she was pregnant with her first child, she and her husband, Ken, did what many modern parents do: they bought a home pregnancy test, and, after celebrating the positive result, started a blog. Because they were seized by the myopia of impending parenthood, and because they had time on their hands (both had recently been laid off from corporate jobs), they built an astonishingly comprehensive site, where the casual browser can now hear baby Kate cry and watch a video of her cooing on the changing table. The baby is chubby and adorable, and the changing table is a Babi Italia Natural Carlisle, which retails for $179.99 and features two shelves, a storage drawer, and swivel casters with brakes. I know the second fact not only because I have seen photographs of Ken assembling the thing but also because one of the links on baby Kate's blog is to her Babies R Us registry, a list of some forty-two items with a combined cost of close to two thousand dollars.



Buying an expensive stroller is a lot like buying a car, with test-ride programs and glossy brochures. This appeals to dads, who are eag

The Maiers' site is an Aladdin's cave of baby merchandise, filled with Ocean Wonders Aquarium Bouncers and ExerSaucer Ultras and Lil' Dippers, and every item—right down to the Behr Premium Plus paint in a shade of soft pink called Hopeful—is linked to the relevant product and purchasing information. Baby products, it would seem, are integral to Jean-Marie's experience of motherhood. The long day spent indoors waiting out Hurricane Frances was made easier by a Playskool Step Start Walk 'n Ride. A playdate with a little boy named Tyler was a fun time to bring out the LeapStart Learning Table, and Kate's first Denny's meal was a treat partly because her new Floppy Seat restaurant-high-chair cover worked so well. The special section called "Our First Three Months" is divided into several parts, including "The Good," "The Bad," and "The Amazing." The Simmons Contoured Changing Pad was good, but the Sassy Deluxe Curved Back and Side Sleeper was amazing. ("Does it really work or is it just our lucky charm? Whatever the answer, ever since we purchased it Kate has been sleeping anywhere from five to eight hours in her bassinet at night.") The less said about the Tiny Love Symphony Animal Mobile the better.

"She was our first baby, so we wanted everything new," Jean-Marie told me. "Besides, there are always new products coming out—something safer or more interesting." One of her few maternal regrets is that Kate was born before the introduction of the Fisher-Price Baby Papasan infant seat, which features calming vibrations and eight soothing songs.

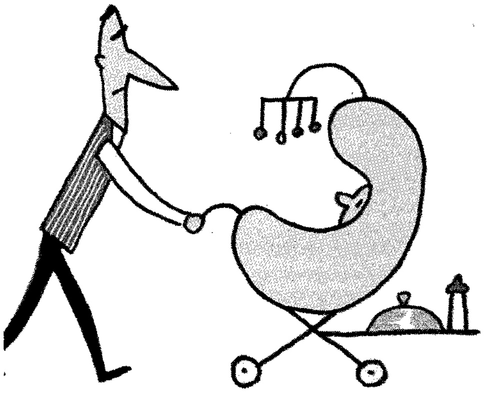
Americans spend six billion dollars a year on gear for their babies. Of the four million babies born here each year, a million of them will be registered at Babies R Us. Wal-Mart and Target, two other large purveyors of infant furniture and products, do not make such statistics available, but even a conservative estimate of those numbers—combined with those of the countless other retailers, such as Pottery Barn Kids and independent baby-supply stores—suggests that a majority of American babies (and almost all first babies) will receive gifts from this system.

These individual lists, which busybodies can inspect by the thousand, both online and at computer terminals in the stores, are testament to many things, from our anxious fixation on childhood to the power of our consumer culture. Just as prospective parents are expected to choose a particular child-rearing philosophy, so, too, are they expected to have strong feelings about the relative merits of the Co-Sleeper and the Deluxe Snuggle Nest. It is their responsibility to make sure that even the gifts that other people give them conform to their ideals.

As I read these lists, with the seasoned perspective of a woman whose

PHILIPPE PETIT-ROULET

twin sons are in elementary school, I knew that many of the requested items wouldn't get used, and that a fair number wouldn't even make it out of their boxes. I rarely saw a gift list that didn't include a baby monitor, although most people quickly learn that unless you have installed Baby in the east wing of your mansion and yourself in the west, you don't need it much. (And in the case of a nervous new parent trying to get a few hours of sleep, the magnified all-night snuffling and farting of a new baby can drive her half-mad with worry.) Some babies are swingers and some are not, but many people think it's best to have a new swing on hand, just in case. And for every person who thinks the Diaper Genie—a contraption that seals stinky diapers into airtight plastic cocoons—surpasses the cotton gin in cultural significance, there is someone else who thinks it's a worthless piece of junk. No matter: half a million people a year can learn where they stand, because one of the fanatics will insist on giving it, registry or no.

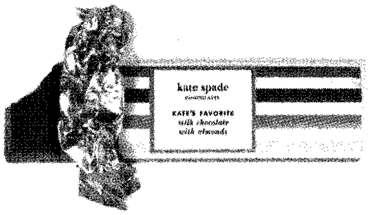


talk about suspension and handling.

Several years ago, Julie Aigner-Clark, a Denver mother, borrowed a friend's video equipment and made a tape of some baby toys she found appealing—a little train going down a track, a hand puppet doing a gentle dance. She added a polylingual audio track and named the result "Baby Einstein." Her amateur video, made and marketed with fifteen thousand dollars in savings, débuted in 1997, at the exact moment that the book "The Mozart Effect" was capturing the imaginations of many American parents. (Aigner-Clark has called her invention "humanities for babies.") In a year's time there would hardly be a musical potty that didn't plink out a polonaise at the first squirt, but Aigner-Clark beat everyone to the punch. Three years ago, the Walt Disney Company bought the brand, and now Baby Einstein is the country's best-selling line of baby and toddler videos, with a hundred and sixty-five million dollars in annual retail sales.

Oprah Winfrey featured the story of Aigner-Clark's transformation from at-home mom to at-home millionaire inventor on her program, and it was during this heady time that Tamara Monosoff walked into her bathroom, in Walnut Creek, California, and discovered that her toddler had unravelled all the toilet paper from the roll. She realized that what she needed was a doohickey that would secure the paper to the roll with a tight elastic band, something a little like a permanent-wave roller. Monosoff, who has a doctorate in education and who worked in the Clinton White House, is not the kind of person to let a good idea fade away. She made a drawing of her gadget, and looked up machinists in the Yellow Pages. Then she hired an engineer and a patent lawyer, and engaged the services of a manufacturing plant in China. In less than a year, the TP Saver was born. It's the kind of product that older people find exasperating ("We just told our kids no!"), but that cleverly exploits one of two major areas of baby-product expansion: gadgets that protect the baby from his dangerous home, and gadgets that protect the house from its marauding baby.

Not long ago, I met up with Monosoff at a coffee shop in Studio City, California. She brought along a TP Saver, and gave me a quick demonstration. She told me that after her product appeared on "The View," the "Today" show, and the "CNN Sunday Morning" show she received close to a million hits on her Web site. Ninety-five per cent of these visitors were not clamoring to get their hands on a TP Saver but were women who had product ideas of their own. Monosoff, who has sold more than thirty thousand units, has incorporated as Mom Inventors, Inc., and has posted everything she knows



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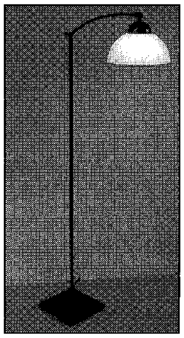

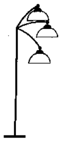

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about inventing on her Web site. Moms who want to sign a nondisclosure agreement—they can download one from the site—are welcome to pitch their inventions to her. She has licensed several products this way, and will put three new ones on the market this spring. Her projected 2004 sales are one and a half million dollars, and she and a friend recently sold a book proposal to McGraw-Hill for "The Mom Inventors Handbook: A Simple Guide for Turning Ideas Into a Profit While Still Being a Mom."

There is nothing new, of course, about the idea of a novel baby product springing from a mother's homey solution to an everyday problem. The first baby swing, the Graco Swingomatic, was introduced, in 1955, after an engineer at a Philadelphia metalworks factory watched his wife quiet a cranky baby using a back-yard swing. The difference is that today's mom inventors are entering a market in which there is an apparently limitless demand for new products, and during a time in which, thanks to the Internet, it has never been easier to sell products directly to consumers. Each new invention spawns a host of others. The car seat, so simple and beneficial, first became widely available in the early eighties; more lately it has given rise to the car-seat-accessory business, which includes the car-seat cover, the car-seat travel bag, the car-seat mobile, snack tray, and activity center, the car-seat mat (which protects the seat of the car from the car seat), and the car-seat clip-on blanket.

A reliable comic premise—one found in masterpieces ranging from Truffaut's "Small Change" to a library full of Looney Tunes capers—involves a baby's cheerfully cheating death, escaping a thousand terrible fates with the blithe unconcern of Mr. Magoo. It's a premise that has fallen out of favor, largely because of the current slightly hysterical belief that all babies—even healthy, closely supervised ones—are in constant jeopardy of being snuffed out. At the All Baby and Child Expo, in Las Vegas this September, there were an astonishing number of products designed to thwart freak accidents: mesh bags to be filled with food for baby to gum without threat of choking, plastic bathtubs that change color if the water is a degree too warm. There was even a tiny video camera that could be rigged above a rear-facing car seat, allowing you to watch your baby's every movement on a dashboard-mounted television while you drive, which is supposed to make him safer.

At the Unisar booth, a salesman was demonstrating the Bébé Sounds sound-and-movement monitor, which consists of a spectacularly sensitive board that, if positioned beneath a crib mattress, will sound an alarm if the baby stops moving for longer than twenty seconds. Lying atop a crib mattress on the demonstration table was a lifelike baby doll, her chest rising and falling to simulate respiration. Under the mattress was the sensor, no thicker than a pea.

"Imagine it's three o'clock in the morning," the salesman entreated me. "You're dead asleep. And in the nursery, a tragedy is occurring." He reached into his pocket and produced a tiny remote control, and he pointed it at the baby. He pressed a button, and she stopped breathing.

"Now we wait," he said. We both turned to the little monitor, he with confidence, I with a mild combination of anxiety and guilt—why was I dead asleep at a time like this?

"It's not beeping," I said tensely.

"It will," he said. Sure enough, the thing started squawking, quietly at first, and then in increasing decibels. He casually lifted the remote and resuscitated the baby with a click of the button. The alarm immediately fell silent.

It was a distasteful proceeding, which traded nakedly on a parent's primal fears. Still, the product clearly worked, and if I had met the salesman when my sons were infants, he could have sold two Bébé Sounds monitors and kept the change.

It is an article of faith among most young parents, and perhaps not a misplaced one, that baby products themselves can be a source of danger. Two organizations have simultaneously soothed and frazzled parents' nerves with respect to such frightening contingencies: the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission and Consumers Union, which publishes *Consumer Reports*. Both had sent representatives to the expo, and these officials walked through the long

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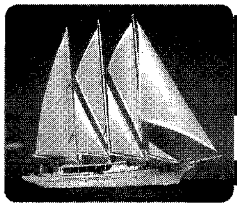

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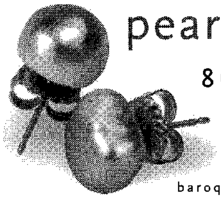

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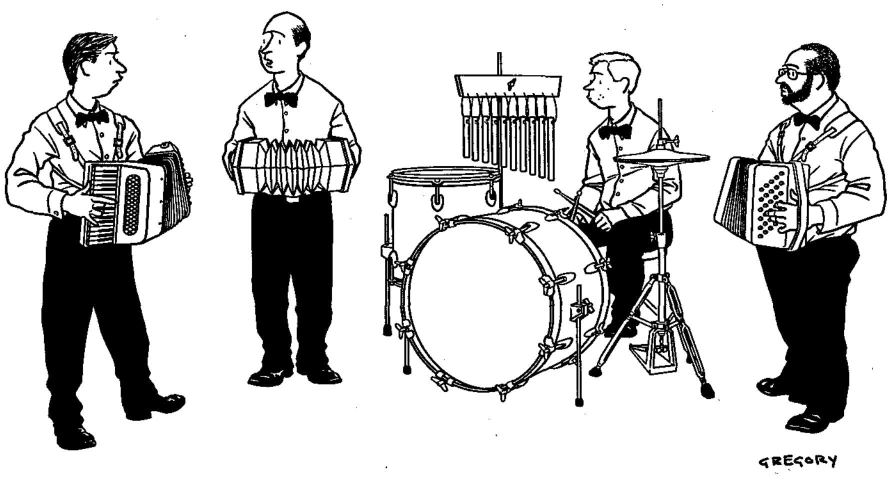


“To be perfectly honest, Pete, I’m not sure it’s Clear Channel that’s holding us back.”

• •

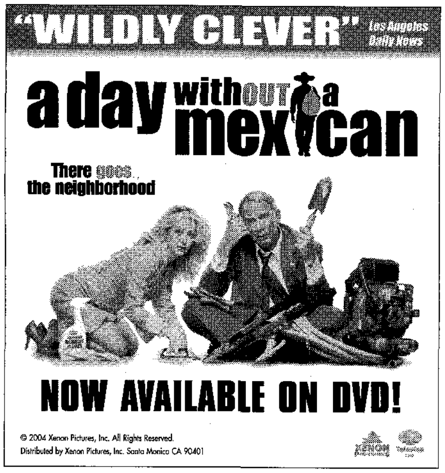
corridors full of Boppy pillows and infant furniture with an authority at once benign and fearsome. Outside the convention hall, there was a table of C.P.S.C. information explaining how a dud product could be put on the “Fast Track Product Recall Program.”

At the Evenflo booth, Greg Pinto, the company’s general manager, was demonstrating the newest model of the Take Me Too! tandem stroller to two representatives from *Consumer Reports.* They were unsmiling and fantastically well informed about strollers, and Pinto, who has been in the juvenile-products business for ten years, talked to them with the bluster-free candor of someone whose product sells itself. Like many American-made strollers, the Take Me Too!, which costs about a hundred dollars, has cup holders for mom and for tots, and a snack compartment. Pinto explained that the woman who buys a tandem stroller is usually not a mother of twins but rather of a toddler and a newborn.

“She’s our toughest customer,” he said, and the analysts nodded. “By now she’s bought a lot of things she doesn’t need, and she knows what matters to her. She cares about weight.” He lifted the stroller to demonstrate how light it was. “She cares about fold.”

Size of fold—the width of a collapsed vehicle—is a significant concern in the stroller industry. Pinto pushed the closing mechanism, and, with a bit of showmanship, began to collapse the stroller with one hand. A metal bar fell off the front and thunked onto the carpeted floor. “Prototype,” he said sheepishly. The analysts nodded forgivingly.

The European stroller-makers were also at the show, each with a fleet of elegant and costly vehicles. The more expensive a stroller, the more the purchasing experience resembles that of buying a car, with test-ride programs and glossy brochures that focus on ergonomics and shock absorption. It’s a sales technique that appeals to dads, who are eager to talk about suspension and handling. High-end strollers prompt a kind of fanaticism in a large number of their devotees, and I myself was briefly visited by this obsession when I stopped by the deserted booth of the venerable English pram-maker Silver Cross. The company’s best-sellers are attractive little umbrella strollers, but what they are famous for are the Balmoral and the Kensington, enormous prams of the old school, with leather buckles, giant chrome wheels, and gabardine covers. There was one of each at the booth, staunchly upholding pieties not favored at the expo: inefficiency and sturdiness and the past. The invention of the pram, in the nineteenth century, changed the way middle- and upper-class babies experienced life; the Balmoral, after all, is father to the Take Me Too! But a trade show in Las Vegas is no place to contemplate social history, and, besides, the Silver Cross sales representative was eager to show me a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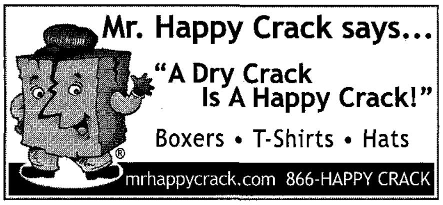
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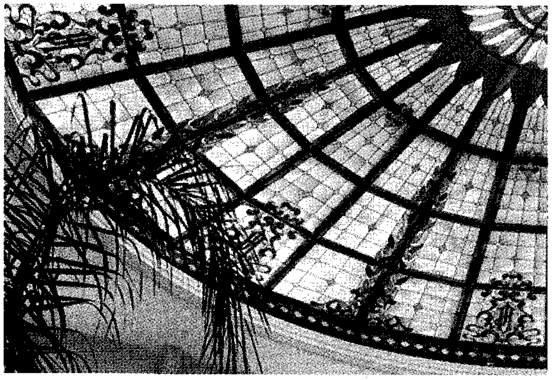
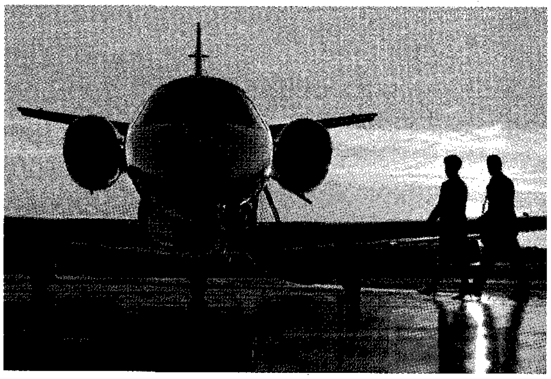
Mobil ☆ STAR-GAZING

By Nao Hauser

If TV were to air a reality show based on the inner workings of a "Mobil Travel Guide" five-star hotel, viewers would likely see two aspects of their pampering service not immediately evident to guests. One is the sheer number of employees it takes: more than a staffer per room in an urban setting and sometimes more than two at large resorts, making hiring and training the big behind-the-scenes action.

Then there's the rivalry implicit in the highest Mobil ratings. Because they are based to a certain extent on relative performance, a five-star hotel has to offer somewhat better service every year, since competitors will keep raising the bar. Suspense builds to the outcome, as it did at last month's announcement of the two highest-starred tiers for "Mobil Travel Guide 2005." The thirty previous five-star winners all retained their eminent standing. Yet none relaxed for more than a nanosecond.





PHOTOS COURTESY OF *TOP*: THE BROADMOOR; *MIDDLE*: THE JEFFERSON HOTEL; *BELOW*: SENTIENT JET

IT TAKES A VIGIL

The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs (800-634-7711) has a forty-five-year, five-star record, and CEO Steve Bartolin calls holding onto it "a race without a finish line." The property, he says, is always in some state of improvement; yet the bedrock remains "when you're here you're you—you're never one of a thousand guests." So little gifts await in your room—maybe the chocolates or spa lotion you so enjoyed last time, or even a "personalized" pet bed for your four-legged companion. And when you stroll around the lake or head for a round of golf amid the stunning Rockies vistas, every staff member you pass will know you by name.

By Mobil's standards, though, the absolute triumph of The Broadmoor can be seen in the unfaltering level of service throughout the major additions of the resort's recent seventy-five-million-dollar renovation. Visually, the upgrade is a tour de force: see the brilliance of the Western sky reflected in the colors of the mosaics around the new infinity pool.

Look up at ceilings painted by Italian artists in 1918 to mimic those of European villas—and then find these complemented by the exquisite woodwork of the new lakeside bar. It all feels as serene as the swans gliding by, but never more so than in the new spa facilities. Renew every muscle in a continuous-flow tranquility tub or beneath the digitally controlled cascades of the serenity shower. Combine this with a Thai massage from a masseuse who spent months in Thailand studying the art, or a hot-stone

AND THE WINNERS ARE . . .

This year the "Mobil Travel Guide" expanded to include Alaska and Hawaii, resulting in the addition of The Four Seasons Resort Maui at Wailea to the five-star list. (Total number of five-stars awarded to date follow each listing.)

CALIFORNIA	
The Beverly Hills Hotel, Beverly Hills	**10**
Château du Sureau, Oakhurst	**9**
Four Seasons Hotel San Francisco	**3**
Hotel Bel-Air, Los Angeles	**13**
The Peninsula Beverly Hills	**12**
Raffles L'Ermitage Beverly Hills	**6**
The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco	**9**
COLORADO	
The Broadmoor, Colorado Springs	**45**
The Little Nell, Aspen	**10**
CONNECTICUT	
The Mayflower Inn, Washington	**10**
FLORIDA	
Four Seasons Resort Palm Beach	**7**
The Ritz-Carlton, Naples	**17**
The Ritz-Carlton, Palm Beach, Manalapan	**3**
GEORGIA	
Four Seasons Hotel Atlanta	**6**
The Lodge at Sea Island, St. Simons Island	**3**
ILLINOIS	
Four Seasons Hotel Chicago	**10**
The Peninsula Chicago	**3**
The Ritz-Carlton, A Four Seasons Hotel, Chicago	**3**
MASSACHUSETTS	
Four Seasons Hotel Boston	**6**
Blantyre, Lenox	**3**
NEW YORK	
Four Seasons Hotel New York, Manhattan	**10**
The Point, Saranac Lake	**8**
The Ritz-Carlton New York, Central Park	**2**
The St. Regis, Manhattan	**10**
NORTH CAROLINA	
The Fearrington House Country Inn, Pittsboro	**6**
SOUTH CAROLINA	
Woodlands Resort & Inn, Summerville	**2**
TEXAS	
The Mansion on Turtle Creek, Dallas	**16**
VERMONT	
Twin Farms, Barnard	**10**
VIRGINIA	
The Inn at Little Washington	**17**
The Jefferson Hotel, Richmond	**5**

For more information about "Mobil Travel Guide" and a comprehensive list of the 2005 Four- and Five-Star Award winners, visit www.mobiltravelguide.com.

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LANDMARK CHARM

This year's five-star award is the fifth consecutive win for The Jefferson in Richmond, Virginia, (888-535-9283), and that marks a saga of survival that would make for riveting entertainment. Opened in 1895 as a glamorous showcase of up-to-date comforts—infamous Gilded Age architect Stanford White held a party in the hotel's rooftop garden for illustrator Charles Dana Gibson and his "Gibson girl" fiancée—the Carrère & Hastings structure was so badly scarred by fires that it had long been boarded up when Louis Malle took over the ballroom to film "My Dinner with André." Today, the life-size Thomas Jefferson sculpted by Edward Valentine for the hotel's début presides in the lobby beneath an original Tiffany skylight as if nothing had ever disturbed his thoughts. He would have loved the wireless high-speed Internet access recently installed in every antique-filled room. And, as an experimental vintner, he would have been pleased to find the best produce of Virginia farms and coast accompanied by great American wines at Lemaire, the hotel restaurant named for his White House maître d'hôtel.

THE BRIGHT STUFF

If there's a single principle that links all competitions, it is that nobody stays at the top without thinking outside the box. The Peninsula Beverly Hills (800-462-7899), a five-star winner for twelve years, demonstrated a keen ability to do so this year when it partnered with Sentient Jet (800-860-2965) to provide flawless service not just from check-in but door-to-door. A traveler who is a Sentient Jet member can now call the hotel concierge to arrange the whole, top-of-the-line trip: limousine pickup, choice of private jet from the most convenient airport, desired meal onboard, type of car waiting, and, of course, the room at The Peninsula.

The partnership wouldn't work if Sentient Jet's service weren't as personalized as that of a five-star. But no less important to fliers is unique flexibility: Sentient Jet members, using a debit account, book only as much flight time as they want, when they want it; and they can use any of five thousand airports, not just the five hundred served by large airlines.

If you were to peer behind the scenes at Sentient Jet you would see company Vice President Caroline Shin going over every single customer communication, from handwritten notes to follow-up phone calls. Look into back-office operations at The Broadmoor, The Jefferson, and every other star with staying power and you will find the same intense activity. And that's why it's unlikely you'll ever hear a TV reality-show host barking anything like "You're checked in!" The reality of luxury is too quiet to be broadcast and too relentless to interrupt: it is the continuous process of connecting with each guest. ✩

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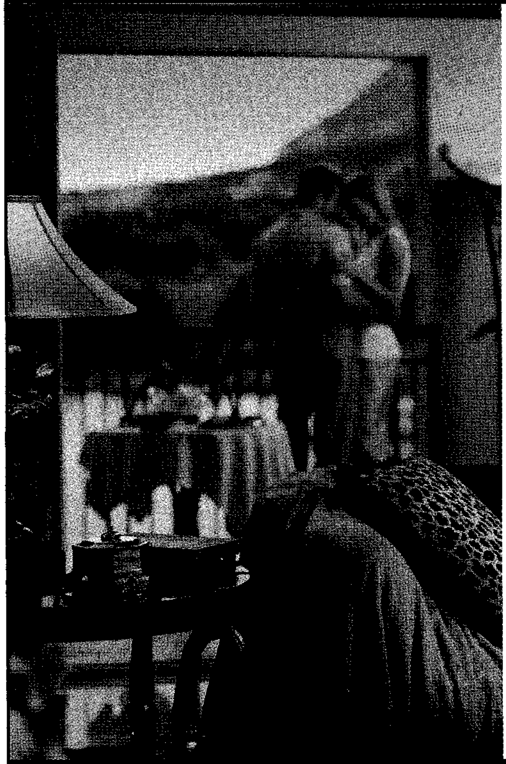

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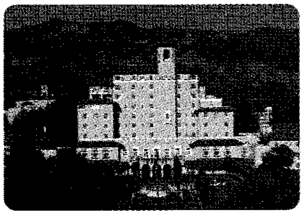

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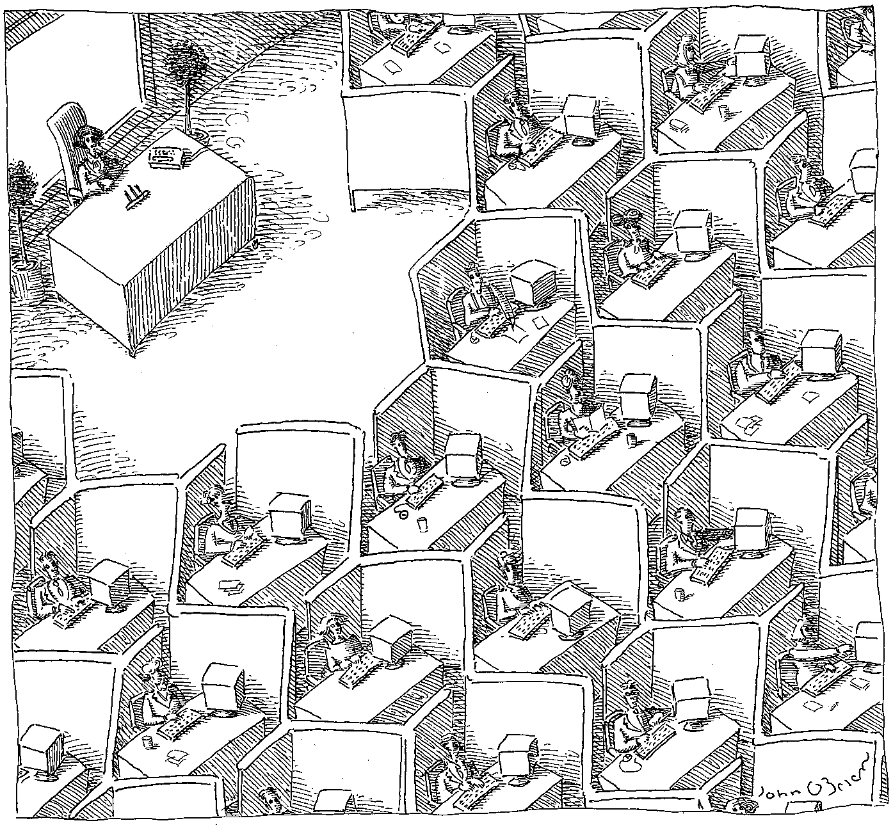
video of Ellen DeGeneres presenting a twenty-eight-hundred-dollar Balmoral to Gwyneth Paltrow. He went on to explain that the "hip-hop culture" has taken to Balmorals the way they took to Bentleys.

At the Stokke booth, however, business was brisk. Stokke is a Norwegian company which recently introduced the Xplory stroller to these shores. The Xplory looks like nothing you've ever seen—at least, nothing you've ever seen that's intended for a baby. The dull gray of a gurney, it has been variously compared to a dentist's chair, a car seat lashed to an I.V. stand, and, by the company itself, an aluminum spinal column with accessories. Stokke takes the controversial position that babies hate going on strolls; the reason for this, they say, is that the traditional stroller is too low to the pavement, subjecting the rider to hot blasts of exhaust fumes and unstimulating vistas. To correct this situation, they have placed the stroller seat a full twenty-seven inches off the ground, near the top of the spinal column; this makes the vehicle look top-heavy, although the sales reps assured me that it's completely stable. I was told that when properly configured the Xplory was capable of traversing not only smooth city streets but also "the beach, the polo field, the rocky path." It costs nearly seven hundred and fifty dollars, slightly more than the Bugaboo, another recent luxury ride, which has a carry-cot and a reversible handlebar.

"As a mom, I would never buy it," the owner of a Denver baby shop told an Xplory salesman. "It looks medical."

"Everyone's entitled to their opinion," he said huffily after she left—and, anyway, her opinion seemed to be the minority one. As he wrote up one order after another, I asked why there was no cup holder for mom's coffee. He informed me that, at Stokke, "we believe in two hands on the wheel."

There was a time when a common American baby gift was a twenty-five-dollar savings bond, for there was once a belief that by the time bond and baby matured, a bit of cash would come in handy. A baby didn't know the difference between a laundry basket and an exquisite bassinet; it was the future that yawned with needs and expenses. What matters now is getting your hands on a Winnie the Pooh 4-in-1 Convertible Bassinet and a Prince Lionheart baby-wipes warmer.



I recently spent a Saturday afternoon at the Babies R Us in Van Nuys, where almost everybody seemed to be either buying a gift from someone's registry or creating their own. Before you can register at Babies R Us, you must complete a form, which begins with spaces for the names of the "registrant" and "co-registrant," for at Babies R Us you are first, and most essentially, not a parent but a shopper. After filling out the forms, the registrants—some of them mere weeks away from parenthood—dithered over cribs and strollers, clearly wishing they had done more homework. They occasionally peeked into the fat portfolios of Babies R Us paperwork that they had been given (along with the temporary use of a bar-code scanner) during the brief orientation session, but the portfolios only added to their burden. The simplifying list of essentials ("Must Haves!") contained close to a hundred and fifty items. Still, they bore grimly on, waving the scanner toward this car seat and that crib mattress, knowing that their shower dates, which at the moment seemed far more urgent and inescapable than their actual delivery dates, were pressing in upon them.

Once freed from the difficulty of the big decisions, however, the couples lightened up and had a little fun. Registering for gifts is akin to making a hundred impulse purchases without any shadow of buyer's remorse. The men wielded the scanners, the women held up colorful crib bedding and fanciful lamps (Babies R Us recommends choosing a nursery theme, like sailboats or stars or puppies), and there was a game-show giddiness to the proceedings. Who could tell which of the selections the couples would actually receive?

In the dead center of the huge maze of products was a lonely-looking man sitting at a card table, hoping to sell college savings plans as part of an in-store promotion. He leaped up in delight when I approached him but wilted when he learned I wasn't in the market for one. I chatted with him for a moment or two—it seemed cruel not to—and then headed back into the flow of shoppers circling the cribs. ♦

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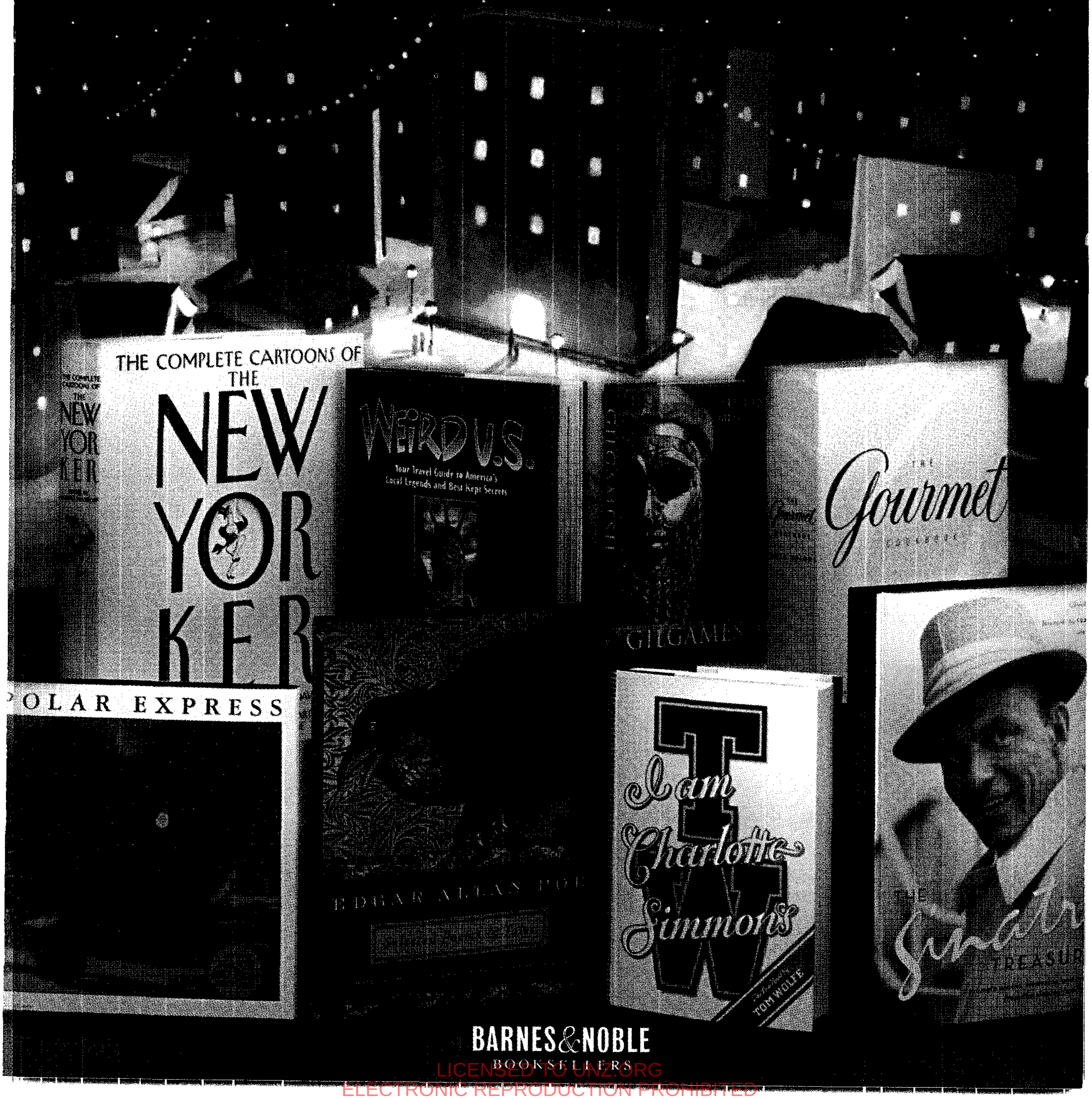
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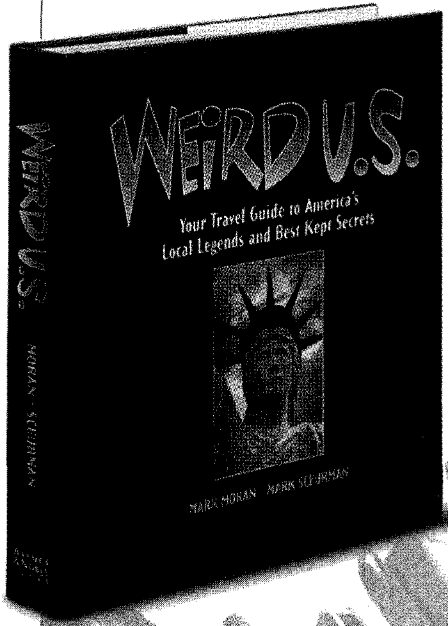
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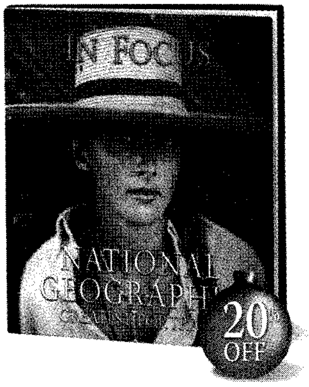
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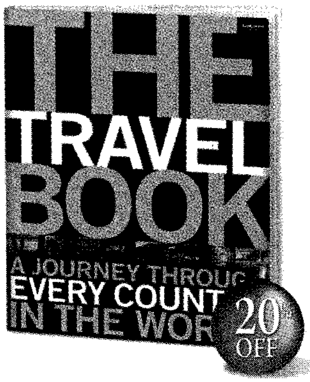
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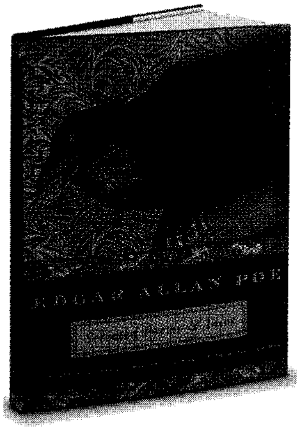
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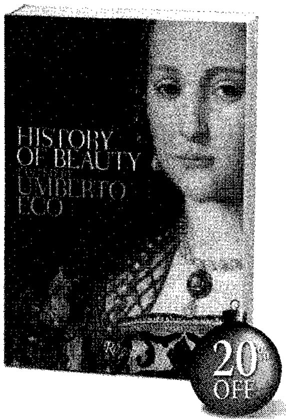
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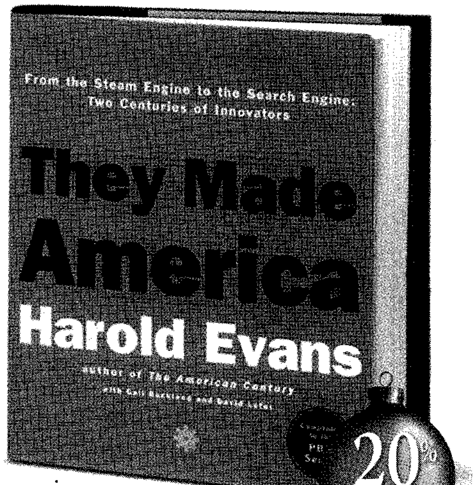
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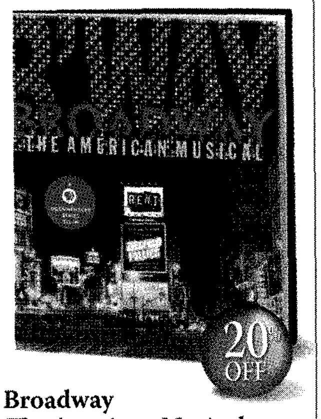

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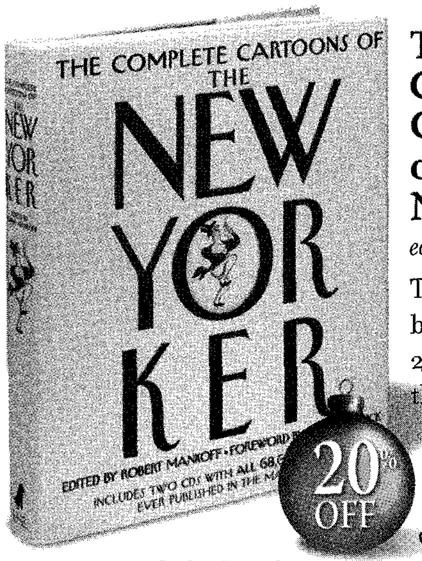

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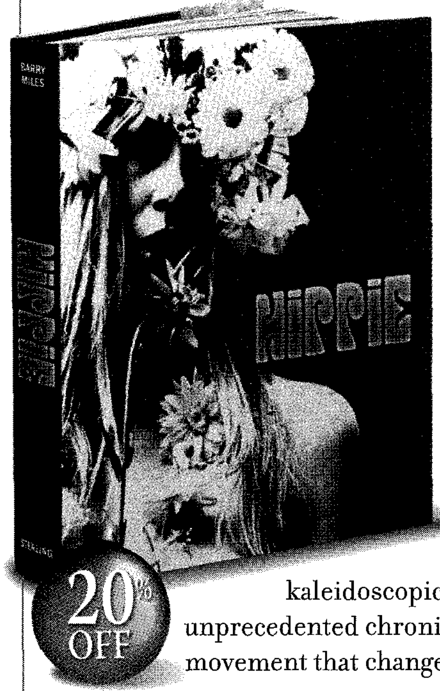

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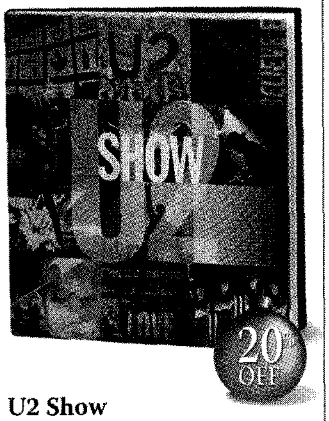

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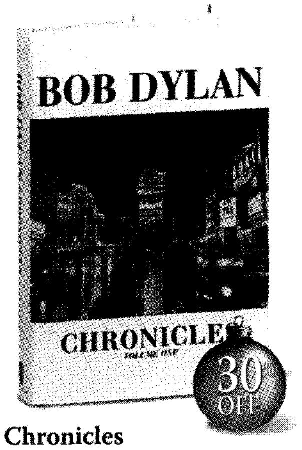

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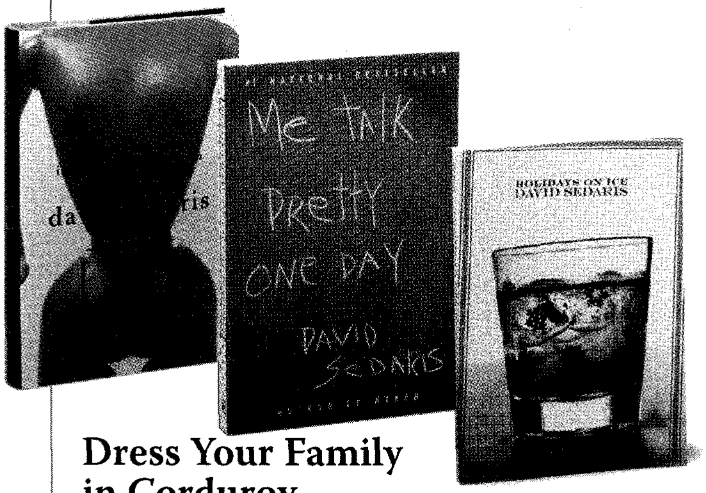
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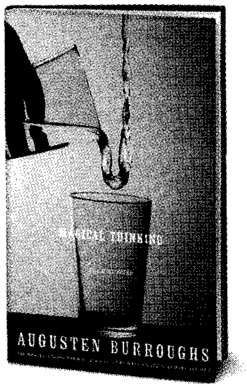
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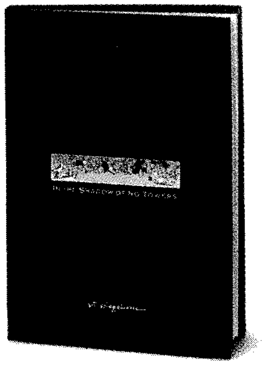
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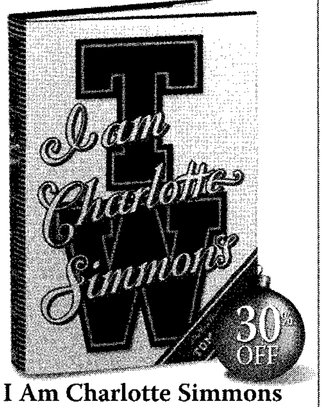
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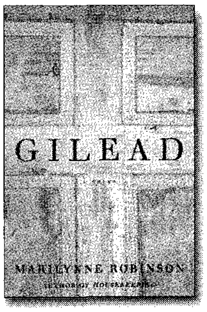
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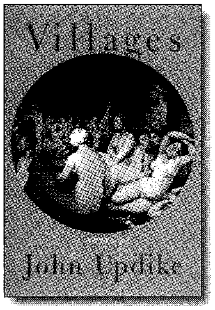
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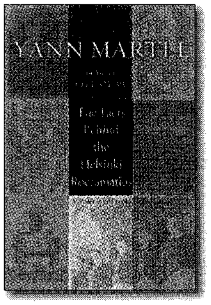
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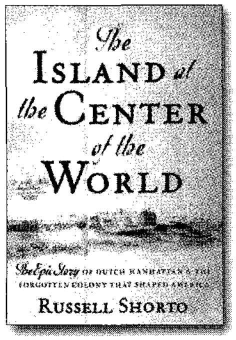

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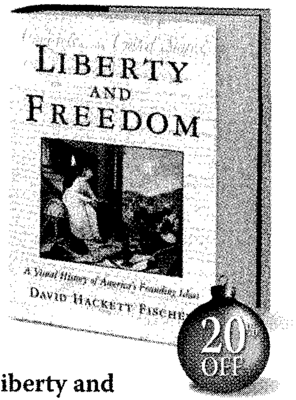

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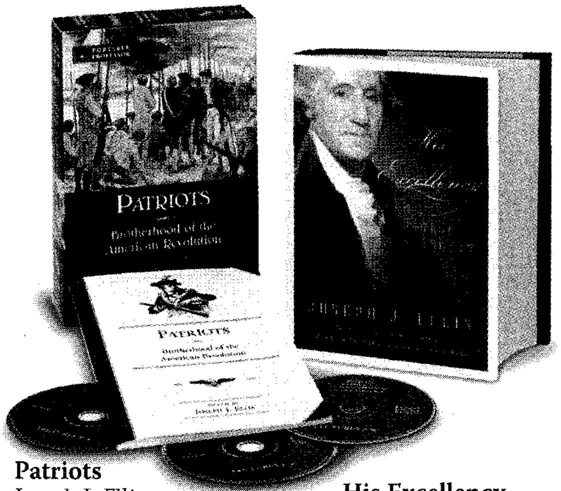

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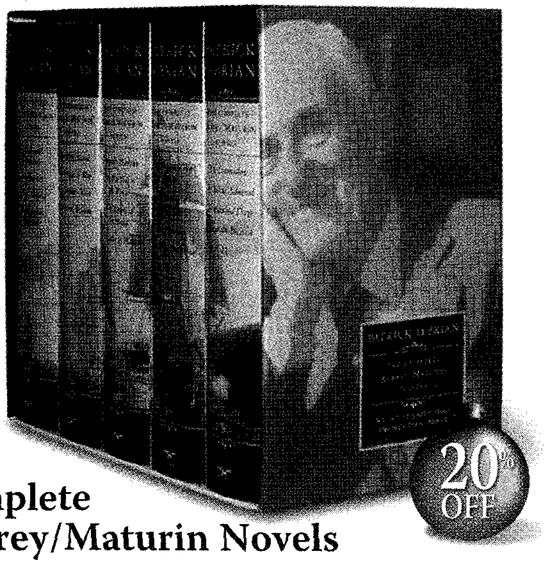

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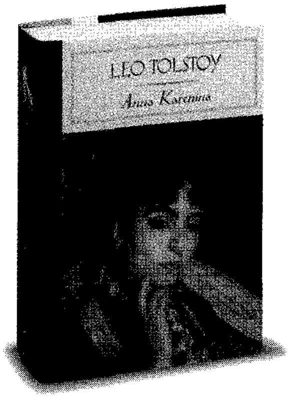

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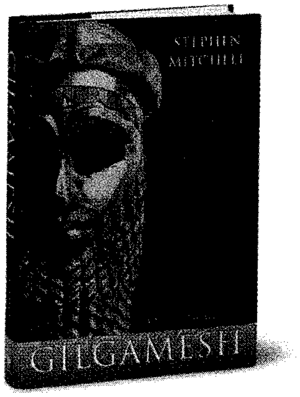

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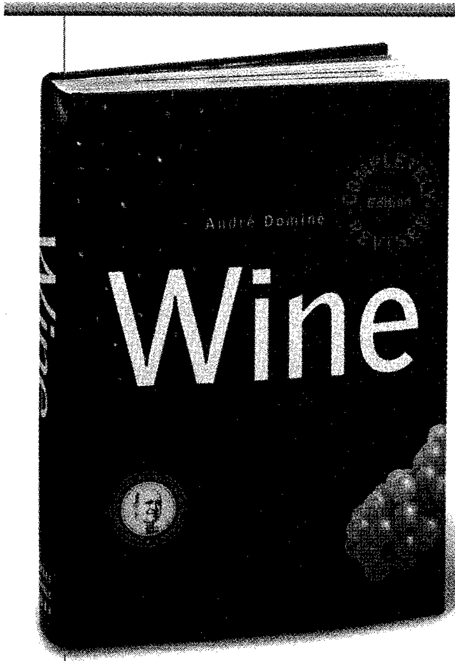
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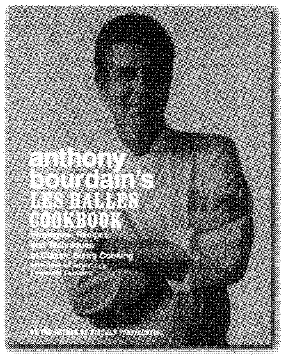
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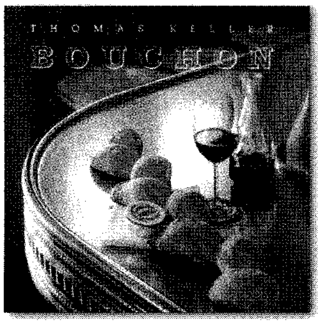
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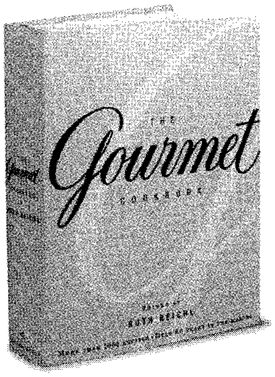
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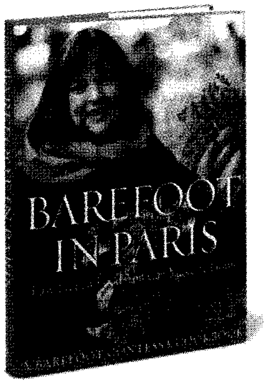
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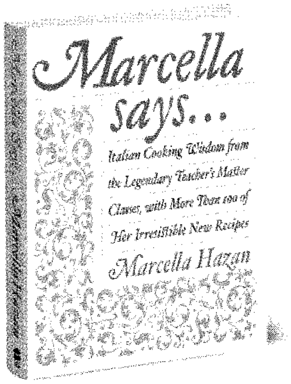
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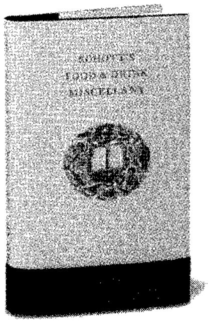
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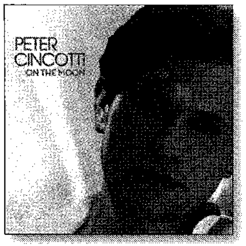

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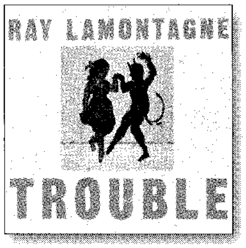

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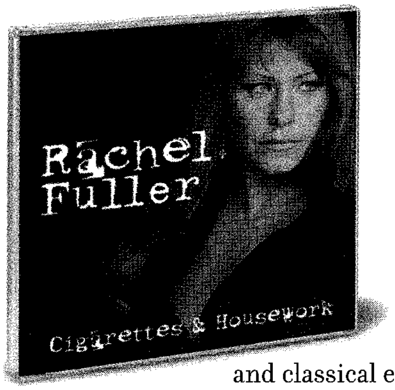

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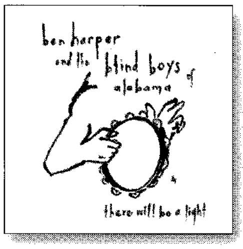

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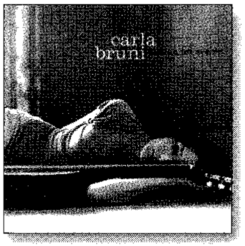

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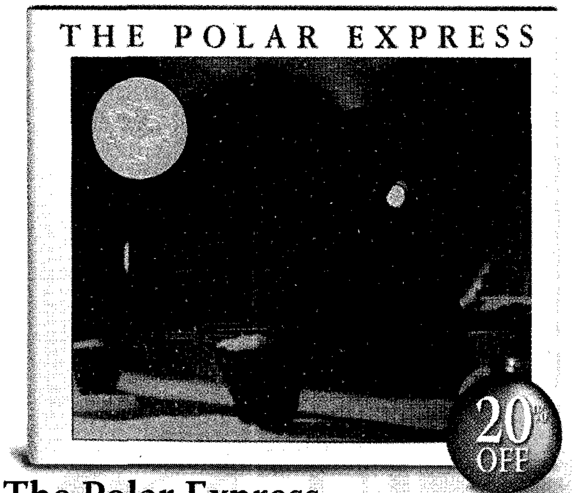
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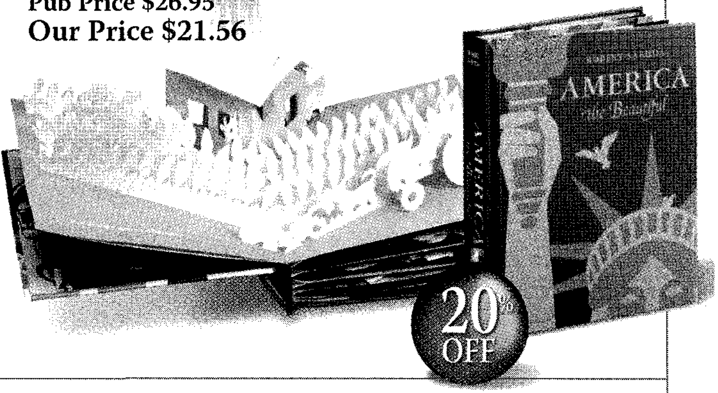
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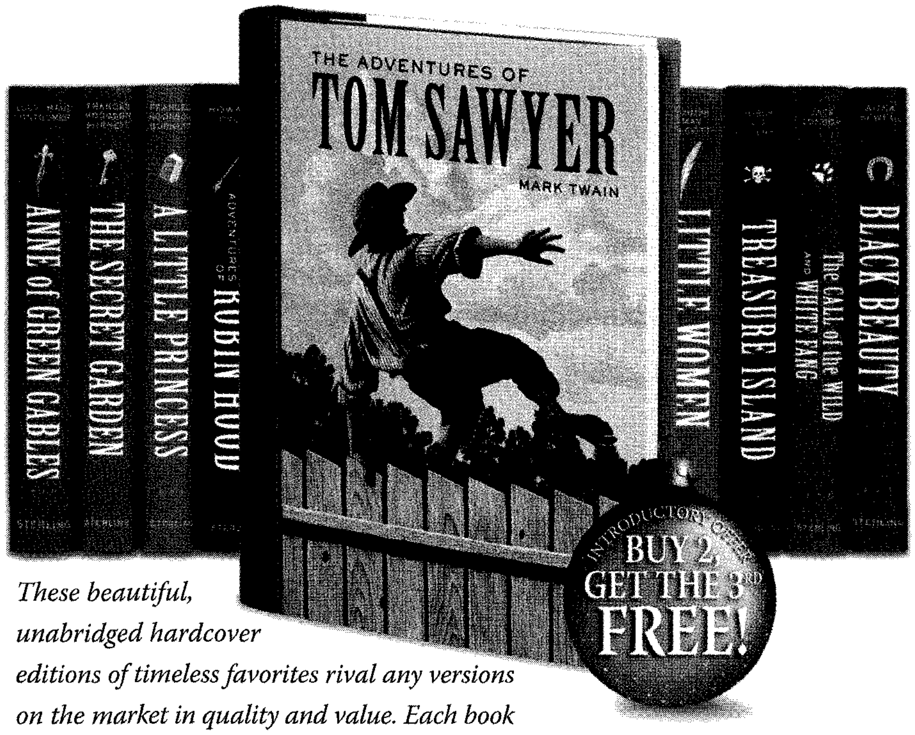
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PAVLOV'S BROTHER

BY ANDY BOROWITZ

Before Dr. Ivan Pavlov won worldwide fame for his experiment proving that dogs could be made to salivate at the ringing of a bell, he performed a nearly identical experiment on his younger brother, Nikolai. That experiment and its regrettable aftermath have only recently come to light, but they have already added fuel to the ongoing ethical debate over whether it is better to conduct scientific experiments on laboratory animals or on one's own relatives.

In the spring of 1903, Pavlov attended a Sunday brunch in St. Petersburg with his parents and Nikolai, an unemployed hat designer whose envy of his celebrated brother bordered on loathing. As Pavlov talked about his plans to study the salivary reflexes of dogs, his brother could be heard muttering the words "douche bag" into his borscht. Pavlov was midsentence when his mother suddenly interrupted him.

"Why are you using a dog and not your brother?" she asked. "He can drool with the best of them."

"Mother, I know what I'm doing," Pavlov said.

"What you're doing is giving away a job that should be your brother's to some dog you don't even know."

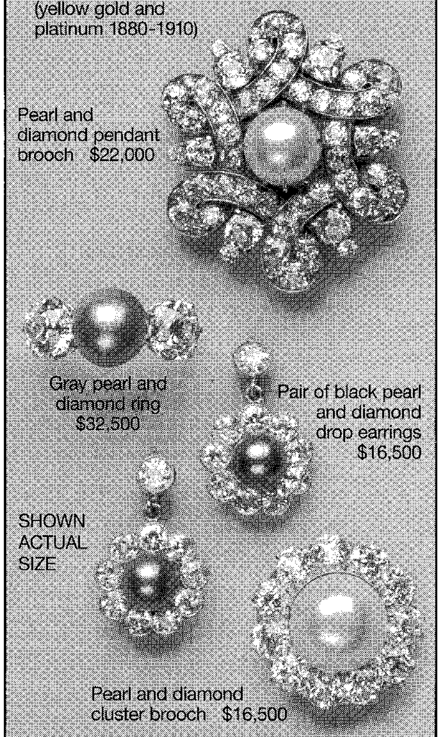
Pavlov looked beseechingly at his father, but the old man, worn down by decades of living with Mrs. Pavlov, offered only a familiar look of resignation. "It will be a nice way for you boys to spend some time together," he said.

From the moment the Pavlov brothers entered the laboratory, their enmity was palpable. Nikolai resented being treated like the subject of a science experiment; Pavlov resented the fact that Nikolai was not a dog. Choosing a dish that would make Nikolai's mouth water became the first of many battlegrounds. Nikolai demanded that his brother feed him beluga caviar, arguing that this was the only food that made him drool on a consistent basis. Pavlov hit the roof, angrily informing his brother that scientists, particularly those in the field of saliva research, were not made of money. After much bickering, caviar was out and croutons were in.

On the first two days of the experiment, Pavlov repeatedly presented croutons to Nikolai, rang a bell, and waited for his brother to drool on cue. Pavlov wrote in his journal, "My brother is an incredible pain in the ass, but his salivary reflexes are superb." On the third day, however, the experiment took a sudden turn. When Pavlov rang the bell but refused to produce any croutons, Nikolai responded with a roundhouse punch to his brother's nose, putting him in the hospital. His mother visited the injured scientist but showed little sympathy. "What were you thinking, ringing the bell but not feeding him anything?" she asked. "You know how cranky Nikolai gets when he's hungry."

With Pavlov out of action, Nikolai trolled St. Petersburg's cafés and night spots, telling anyone who would listen how well "his" amazing experiment was going. Nikolai's self-promotion reached its apex in a glowing profile in the Sunday Styles section of the St. Petersburg *Times*, in which Nikolai dismissed Pavlov's role in the laboratory. "He just writes things down," Nikolai was quoted as saying. "I'm the one who's doing all of the drooling." Reading this libel in his hospital bed, his broken nose still in a splint, Pavlov decided that he had finally had enough.

The next day, Pavlov replaced his brother with a female collie. The two never spoke again, unless one counts an obscene telegram from the autumn of 1903, which most scholars attribute to Nikolai. In his Nobel speech, Pavlov thanked God, his agent, and the collie, but made no mention of his brother. Nikolai faded into obscurity, eventually becoming an assistant bookkeeper at a St. Petersburg eraser factory. Those who remembered him from this last, sad phase of his life said that he never gave the slightest hint of having played such a pivotal role in the history of science, except when the telephone rang. ♦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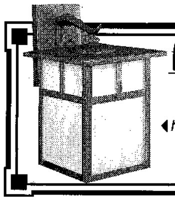
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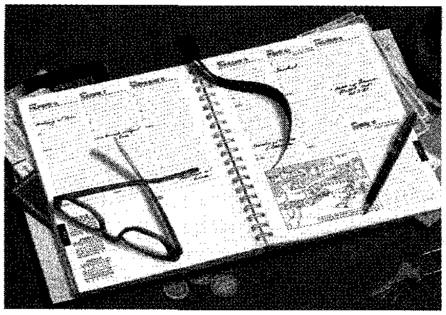

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PARIS JOURNAL

THE END OF THE WORLD

Crisis at France's most venerable newspaper.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

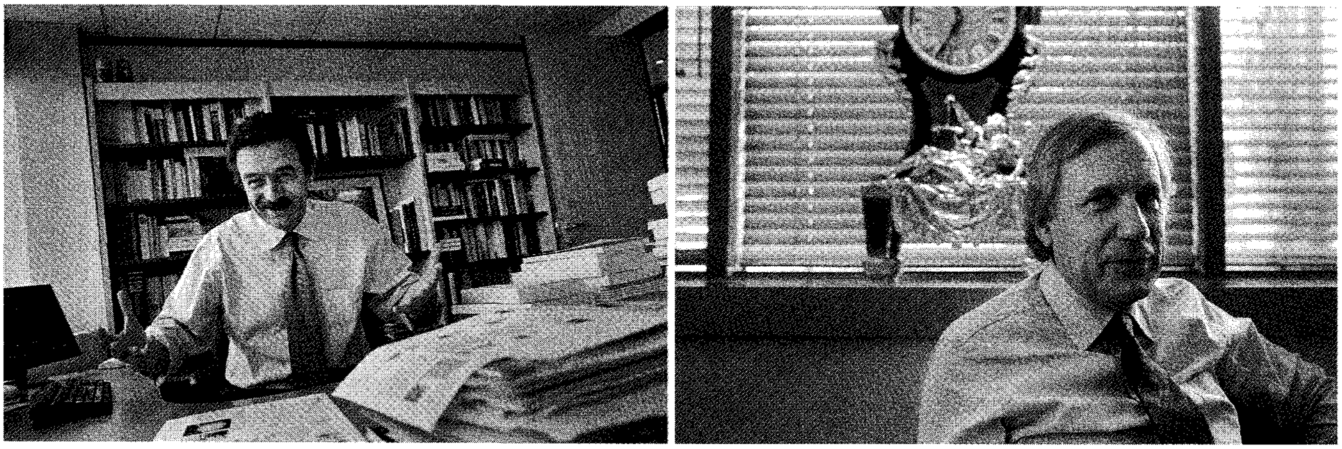
Although it appears every day around one o'clock, the Paris newspaper *Le Monde* is dated to the following morning, so that the paper one reads on Monday afternoon is written as though it were already Tuesday, and things that may happen today appear to have happened yesterday, while what happened last night appears to have happened two days ago. Even news that has not yet taken place is thus imbued with a note of calming retrospective hindsight. The postdating of actuality is typical of *Le Monde's* loft and what was, for a long time, its serenity. As it celebrates its sixtieth anniversary next month, it comes as close as any newspaper can to being the official journal of an entire educated nation.

It is hard to adequately explain just what *Le Monde* means to France. People say that it is like the *Times* in New York, but the *Times* seems, in comparison, modest in its ambitions. The *Times*, like certain pagan gods, claims only omnipresence: it is everywhere and sees all. *Le Monde*, like the God of the Old Testament, claims omnipresence *and* omniscience: it sees all, knows everything, and is always right.

A tabloid-size paper, folded like a broadsheet, it is perhaps the least newsy of all the great newspapers. Its circulation is currently around three hundred and fifty thousand, small by British standards. It is one of three important national dailies still left in France, along with the smaller *Libération*, the left-wing daily that was founded as a Maoist instruction sheet in 1973 and evolved into a paper that is still one of the most entertaining in the world; and, of nearly equal size, *Le Figaro*, the conservative daily (and the only surviving paper from the Cubist collage era) that has lately gone from diehard Gaullist to sprightly Gallo-Thatcherian.

The front page of *Le Monde* usually begins with a headline that is, as often as not, recapitulative rather than declarative: "THE AMERICAN ELECTION APPROACHES," or "M. PUTIN: IN THE FACE OF TERRORISM." Until recently, there was almost never a front-page photograph, and never one in itself sensational. (*Faits divers* is the French phrase for personality journalism, and *Le Monde* gets in trouble with its readers when it publishes any. Even the cursory treatment it gave to the inquest on the death of Princess Diana was regarded by many of its readers as inexcusable tabloidism.) Instead, nearly every day the headline is set off by a sketch by the paper's chief cartoonist, Plantu, who tends to be somewhat to the anarchic left of the editors. Until 1995, the front page began with an elaborate Gothic masthead and offered an editorial conducted in a tone of *du haut en bas*, in which the high was very high and the low very low.

Le Monde is not, by the anxious standards of American journalism, exhaustively reported; French journalists tend to think that there are more interesting things to do in life than to pester some politician or official who has never said anything interesting in the first place for one more quote. The news pages incline toward crisp and knowing summaries, with the first sheaf of stories devoted to foreign news, the second to French news, much of it written in an ironic, confident tone such as *The Economist* achieves in English. It is in the opinion pages, now called Débats, that the paper shows its real juice and superiority. Day after day, these pages, edited by a worried, serious intellectual named Michel Kajman, engage in high-minded debate on serious issues, where the reader is expected to grasp an allusion to Heidegger or a gesture toward Habermas. The opinions run, Kajman says, "from the democratic left to the democratic right; the extreme right and the undemocratic left have no place in our paper." It is far from kind to French nationalism, and far from uniformly hostile to the United States. One of the most talked-about opinion pieces in *Le Monde* in recent years was by Philippe Sollers, and accused all French culture of vegetating, of having become “moldy.”



Critics say that Edwy Plenel (left) and Jean-Marie Colombani, of Le Monde, “do not love” France. Photographs by Gilles Peress.

MAGNUM

The editorial proper, which follows the opinion pages, is usually mild and brief. Then there are several business pages, a single page on sports, a science page, and reviews of jazz and classical concerts and movies and theatre. Once a week, the book review appears, typically with sonorous reviews of recent fiction and intelligent reviews of books on history and philosophy. The reviews are often positive, not to say effusive; in French magazine and newspaper reviews, the lines of friendship—of the *réseau*, the network, in which a writer happens to be situated—can usually be seen as clearly as the strings on a marionette in an old “Thunderbirds” show. On Fridays (that is, Thursdays), the paper does what is, by New York standards, a fairly cursory job of covering food and restaurants, perhaps for the same reason that the *Times* does a fairly cursory job of covering pigeons: they are just too familiar to notice much.

Despite the air of serene continuity, though, Le Monde has, in the past year and a half, endured a crisis that has riled its staff and undermined the paper’s credibility—and which has certain parallels to the crises that overtook the BBC, accused of mishandling sources, and the *Times*, with the Jayson Blair affair, during the same period. “I doubt that anyone in France has undergone the degree of examination and inquisition that we three have in the past year,” said Jean-Marie Colombani, the paper’s editor-in-chief and director (and the man who wrote the now famous “We Are All Americans” editorial that appeared on September 12, 2001). He was in his office at the paper’s headquarters, on the quiet Rue Claude-Bernard, in the Fifth Arrondissement, and speaking of himself; Edwy Plenel, his executive editor; and Alain Minc, the board chairman. “I remind myself that it is useful and salutary to undergo this kind of critique, but it does not always *feel* that congenial.”

Minc, a management consultant who also writes popular books of essays, sees the crisis in more global terms. “Here’s the essential thing,” Minc, a small, quick-witted, amused man, said in his office, on the Rue George V, where he holds court. “Three institutions of authority—the *Times*, the BBC, and *Le Monde*—have all been struck in the same twelve-month period by crises unique in their histories. Different local causes, of course, in each case, but is this mere coincidence? The real question is: What connects the three?”

The *Le Monde* affair began with the publication of two books last year. First came “The Hidden Face of *Le Monde*,” more than six hundred tightly packed and overheated pages written by Pierre Péan, a journalist best known for a book about François Mitterrand’s early, collaborationist years, and Philippe Cohen, a rough-and-tumble left-wing polemicist. It fired a shotgun blast of poisoned pellets at the paper, in an encompassing—and unrelentingly malignant—attack on the integrity and honesty of Colombani, Plenel, and Minc, the three most important men at the paper since 1995.

The heart of the accusation was that the three were pathologically arrogant. They had conducted a reign of terror, and they had done it in the mad pursuit of power, of becoming the most feared and potent king-making authority in France. They punished their enemies: shortly after taking over at the paper, they had gone after President François Mitterrand, by exposing the severity of the prostate cancer from which he was suffering (and eventually died), and, a year later, began a drive to oust the right-wing Prime Minister Alain Juppé. Then they punished their friends: they exposed the Trotskyite past of the Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin just before his failed run for the Presidency, and implicated his well-respected finance minister, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, in an investigation into corrupt fund-raising. Such “man hunting” was all part of an effort, according to Péan and Cohen, to “honor or discredit politicians, businessmen, and intellectuals, according to their own interests and partisan choices.”

The Péan-Cohen tome was joined on the bookstore shelves by “The Power of *Le Monde:* When a Newspaper Wants to Change France,” by Bernard Poulet, a prominent journalist. Poulet’s book was far less malicious in tone but just as damning in substance. “It is no longer simply a counter-power,” Poulet concluded of the paper. “It is a power confronting power. Even more, it gives the impression that it can bend the power of the State to its own power.”

The *affaire* provided plenty of twigs for a bonfire, but it was *Le Monde’s* editors (in a curious parallel with the *Times*) who made a pile of the kindling and put a match to it. Shortly after the publication of the Péan-Cohen book, the editors held a meeting of their staff, in order to vent their outrage and rally the troops. What

"My first choice, of course, is to solve things amicably."

• •

they learned, as the *Times* editors did, was the danger of trying to rally the troops when they are not really troops but ornery reporters with job security and no more affection for their bosses than journalists normally have, not to mention a long history of resentments at the high-handed way the paper had been managed. Their response was to imagine that the boss must be getting desperate if he needed the support of the masses. ("They said, 'We're all under attack!' " one insider recalled. "And I thought, Well, *you* are. *I'm* not!") The meeting, more than any other incident, set off a kind of revolt within the paper which led eventually to the firing of Daniel Schneidermann, one of its more distinguished critics, and the censuring of Plantu, the cartoonist.

Many at the paper were bewildered by the overreaction of the chiefs. "They should have said, 'It's normal, they're wrong, back to work,' " a French journalist remarked. Undeterred, the three editors brought a libel suit against Péan and Cohen. Where a libel suit in America is simply an occasion for a long and usually inconclusive litigation, a libel suit in France is quickly judged and relatively easy to win, and the damages tend to be limited. As the lawsuit rapidly worked its way through the courts to its conclusion this June, everyone involved obsessively watched the flames leap, and wondered who, in the end, would be singed.

Le Monde was born, by government fiat, in 1944, just after the Liberation, as an independent paper, and was midwifed by de Gaulle himself. *Le Temps*, the leading "serious" Paris paper of prewar France, had disgraced itself by continuing to appear under the collaborationist government in Vichy, and de Gaulle recognized the need for a successor. He was persuaded to call on a youngish Catholic journalist named Hubert Beuve-Méry to edit the paper. Beuve-Méry took over *Le Temps's* Gothic masthead, but called his paper *Le Monde:* its subject was the world, not merely the times.

Le Monde was, as Beuve-Méry imagined it, a "newspaper of reference" rather than a "newspaper of record." This somewhat metaphysical distinction remains crucial to its contributors and its editors. "To say we are a paper of reference is to say that we are not a neutral encyclopedic mirror of events," Colombani explains. "We are an engaged paper, engaged in the issues of the time. Our promise to our readers is that our engagement will be honest and intelligent and fair to the other side of the engagement, and that the great debates of France will be taken up in our pages." The paper was Olympian and honest in the sense that the opinions and biases that filled its columns were straightforward and ideological, not corrupt and personal. Until Beuve-Méry's day, French newspaper journalism had often been a cesspool of cynicism, corruption, and cupidity; things had not changed much since Balzac's description of journalism for cheerful daily hire in "Lost Illusions." The arrival of *Le Monde* heralded the arrival at seriousness of an entire profession.

As an openly side-taking paper, *Le Monde* was hostile both to the French Communist Party and (given its genesis, even more courageously) to the Gaullists after they returned to power in 1959. Perhaps to compensate for being openly anti-Communist, *Le Monde* had a generally sympathetic approach to *Tiers Mondisme*, Third Worldism, and could be relied on to sentimentalize any "national liberation" movement, no matter its cruelties. Most notoriously, the Khmer Rouge's takeover of Phnom Penh was greeted in the paper with the comment "*La ville est libérée*," and its correspondent there obscured the "rumors" of genocide even after the fact was becoming apparent to the rest of the world.

Yet the paper's achievements were formidable. Like Roy Jenkins and the British Labour Party grandees, Beuve-Méry and his editors were among the key Cold War figures in Europe who saved anti-Communism from itself—made it respectable by being so clearly independent of mind and resistant to any apparent truckling to America. The symbolic role of a newspaper or magazine is generally at least as important as its content, and often more evident. Scoops and masterpieces are few and far between, and what keeps a reader addicted to his paper is a continuity of tone. Reading *Le Monde* became a daily, secular ritual of French rectitude.

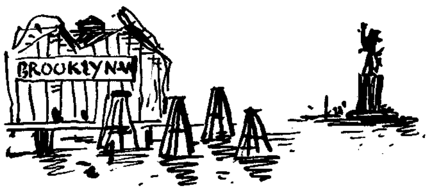
As part of Beuve-Méry's plan to keep the paper independent, *Le Monde* had been incorporated as a kind of journalists' co-op, with many shareholders but with the working journalists always controlling approximately thirty per cent of the stock—enough to guarantee that they could control the vote for the paper's editor-in-chief. (In addition, in 1985 the Société des Lecteurs, a group of shareholders drawn from the readers, was created, and now holds ten per cent of the shares.) The system had the consequence of making the internal life of the paper into a permanent campaign. Senior editors and writers were not merely writing, schmoozing, kibbitzing, and complaining, as they always do; they were actually running for office. The pressure at the paper as an election approached must have approximated that of a submarine on deep dive.

Beuve-Méry's immediate successor, Jacques Fauvet, was admired for loosening the stays on the paper, until people remembered that what they liked was the tight fit. The paper nonetheless got through the eighties in reasonable shape, most memorably attacking President Giscard d'Estaing over an alleged gift of diamonds given to him by the African dictator Jean-Bédel Bokassa, and supporting the Socialist Mitterrand in the belief that alternation of left and right was essential for the country's political health. Meanwhile, the paper was losing money and readers, though just how much, and just how badly, is a matter of dispute.

By the early nineties, the sense of financial crisis had increased, and an editor who had been on several desks at the paper, Jean-Marie Colombani, stepped forward as a potential savior. Colombani is Corsican, and although he is Corsican only in the way that Howell Raines is Southern—it's a significant part of his background, but he's been in the capital a long time—people in Paris speak of his Corsican nature quite obsessively, as if he had recently arrived on a boat from Ajaccio. (The Napoleonic heritage makes the idea of a Corsican intriguer irresistible.) With the crucial backing of Alain Minc, then the president of the Société des Lecteurs investment group, Colombani managed to persuade the voting journalists that their financial interests (pensions, bonuses) lay with him. He also persuaded potential rivals to step aside, by making the kinds of deals that are natural to political contests. When he won the post of editor-in-chief and director, in 1994, he took as his executive editor Edwy Plenel, who had made his name at the paper as the investigative journalist responsible for uncovering the 1985 Rainbow Warrior incident, where a Greenpeace boat turned out to have been sunk by the French Secret Service.

One of the first things that Plenel and Colombani did was to remove the front-page editorial column through which the editors had spoken directly to their readers and condescended to the ministers of the French state. The removal served to reduce the obvious (and, to the new editors' eyes, somewhat amateurish) officiousness of the paper; more subtly, the critics claim, it enabled them to make the entire front page into a commentary on the day's news. Then came the piece announcing—and describing in minute anatomical detail—Mitterrand's prostate cancer, something that would have been unthinkable in the old dispensation. Then the familiar remote headlines were augmented by headlines that, as the Poulet book argues, began to campaign for the cause of Édouard Balladur, the conservative Prime Minister, who had decided to run against Jacques Chirac, his mentor, for Mitterrand's job. After nine years of Chirac's utter mediocrity and opportunism, the decision to back Balladur may, in retrospect, seem wise and even prescient. But at the time it was regarded as perverse—a right-wing choice for a center-left paper. Then, not long after Chirac's election, in the strike-bound winter of 1995, the paper swung around to lead a campaign against Juppé, Chirac's Prime Minister, while embracing the strikers and their intellectual leader, the great sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.

Most of what the new team did made sense. Overturning the paper's tradition of being written in-house, in an in-house style, they brought in a number of star writers, among them Philippe Labro, Bernard-Henri Lévy, and Daniel Cohen. Yet the paper continued its odd, zigzagging line as it began a series of vengeful campaigns in which the normally cozy interpenetrations of French business and politics were "put in question" and exposed. After the revelations about Mitterrand's health and the anti-Juppé crusade came scandals surrounding the fund-raising of the R.P.R., Chirac's party. This ended with indictments of some close to Chirac, and with a Supreme Court ruling that, as long as he remains President, Chirac himself cannot be indicted. (This has led some commentators to insist that Chirac will run a third time for the Presidency, since his choices could be the Élysée or the Santé—that is, the Presidency or jail.) Nor were *Le Monde's* targets only political; Jean-Marie Messier, the former head of Vivendi Universal, came under similar assault. The editors' crusades also fed on those of a generation of magistrates who, for the first time in French history, were prepared to aggressively investigate corruption in French politics and business. The result, though, was not always fair-minded justice. Dominique Strauss-Kahn, for example, the former finance minister, was eventually acquitted of corruption charges, but not before he had been hounded from his job.



The real point of Péan and Cohen's book was not to draw attention to the investigative overkill, which was already the talk of Paris, but to explain its true motives. In their view, *Le Monde's* editors were pursuing power because they "do not love" France. Péan and Cohen's angriest complaints were aimed at the very accomplishments that an American journalist would find most admirable: the revelation of "*affaires*," particularly the corruption of President Chirac's fund-raising apparat in Paris; and the exposure of Mitterrand's cancer and Jospin's Trotskyite past. It seems strange to an American reader that left-wing journalists would attack other journalists for being insufficiently respectful of the prerogatives of the state. But for Péan and Cohen the prerogatives of the state were identical with the identity of the nation. Behind the apparently arbitrary twists and turns of the newspaper's investigations, they argued, lay a strategy: to discredit anyone who rebelled against the editors' "*pensée unique*" of cosmopolitan Europeanism and free-marketry. The editors were said to be radical anti-nationalists in not very good disguise. Plenel's own Trotskyite past was discussed at length, and he was accused of having brought Trotskyite (i.e., intolerant and extreme) attitudes, if not opinions, to the paper.

In seeking to undermine French nationalism, Péan and Cohen went on, the editors seemed to be following a family habit. Plenel's father had been an anti-colonial French administrator in the Caribbean, and Colombani was the son of a strongly nationalist Corsican, who they alleged had been active in anti-French circles in his youth. That was the real thrust of the accusation: *Le Monde*, once the national team, had become a pickup club team, made up of strangers and playing for the other side.

Plenel had written eloquently, in a book-length essay, of his faith in *métissage*, cosmopolitan mixing, his faith in the man "who cannot say 'I am,' who is himself and another." Péan and Cohen would have none of it. "This mystique of mixing," they wrote witheringly, "leaves only one issue about identity, that of the individual." Plenel, they complained, was hostile to any notion of a collective identity—any notion of the French nation itself. This line of contention led Bernard-Henri Lévy, in the magazine *La Règle du Jeu*, to argue that the assault on *Le Monde* was a cross-partisan attempt to return to a renewed *idéologie française*, an ugly, reflexive, and frightened nationalism that could cross between left and right.

Yet the irritant for the subjects of the assault lay in details of supposed bullying and alleged meanness. Indictments accuse, but it is details that vilify. Plenel was shown harassing small, independent journalists who he thought might beat him to the Jospin-outing punch. ("You're nothing but another Beria!" one unintimidated journalist was said to have cried over the telephone.) Minc, Péan and Cohen suggested, had been comically out of his depth in a business venture in Belgium. (He was, they write, in what they imagine is an English idiom, "too clever by oath.") The large accusations were so soiled by cheap tribalism that they were at least possible for the editors to rebut with dignity. It was the portraits of tiny vindictive gestures, without any compensatory tales of compassion or generosity, that drove them nuts, and into court.

"They are *méchants*, they are really *méchants*," Bernard Poulet, the most persuasive of the paper's detractors, said this summer. *Méchant* means vicious—a bad dog is *méchant*—and when Poulet uses it to describe the editors of *Le Monde* he means that they are cruel without being particularly crafty. "They have gone to war on their own experts," he says, "on the people who had been at a desk for years and who could, on a technical question of foreign relations or unemployment, simply shrug and say, 'Well, it's just not like that.' They're being replaced by bright 'generalists' who owe their allegiance entirely to Colombani and Plenel. They'll go to any length, and what they want is power. Not to be a counterpower, a force that keeps power in check. They dream of becoming a power, which is a kind of betrayal of our function."

Poulet is dispassionate as he says this, and he maintains the tone in his book. He is open-collared and in short sleeves, and he works behind a desk in a journalist's office that looks like a journalist's office, piled high with old newspapers and magazines. Poulet, who is now an executive editor at *L'Expansion*, a business weekly, is a distinguished journalist, but he is not favored by, or particularly interested in, the kind of Saint-Germain-des-Prés literary network toward which *Le Monde's* editors have supposedly gravitated. (One of the unspoken but deeply felt divisions between the new *Le Monde* and the rest of the French press, an outsider senses, is the perception that the editors were eager to use their new power to enter a literary and fashionable world that stands far apart from the defiantly informal milieu of most professional journalists.)

"Some of the problem, of course, is a matter of circumstances," Poulet goes on. "The new editors came to *Le Monde* just at the moment when the rest of the French daily press fell into crisis. And then there are the enduring problems." He ticks them off: the law regulating kiosks, which assures that every publication in France is sold on equal terms with every other, and is helping to drive kiosk owners out of business; the relentlessly declining circulation of French dailies; the eternal French burden of rising costs and implacable unions.

"But the editors of *Le Monde* chose to respond to this by turning the newspaper into an instrument of inquisition," Poulet says. "It was the Watergate syndrome transplanted to France. They thought the time was right for Robespierrism." He points out, "Péan and Cohen have a fundamental misunderstanding. What the people at *Le Monde* hate is not France—that's absurd. But I do think they basically dislike democracy such as it really exists today. This is why, in the same year that they embraced Balladur in the spring, they embraced Bourdieu at Christmas: he shared the same contempt for politics as politics, and the same incapacity to see anything except in terms of an abstract morality play. It is part of Plenel's Trotskyite heritage, this taste for absolutes. I understand it very well because, you see"—he smiles with a slight hint of embarrassment—"I was once one, too. You may call it a French singularity."

Of the many strange national contexts into which *l'affaire du Monde* falls, the role of the ex-Trotskyites is perhaps the strangest. Both Lionel Jospin

"Do you even care about evil anymore?"

and the man who publicized his political past, Plenel, were Trotskyites in their youth. Trotskyism is a relic of May, '68, when radical sects of all kinds flourished. But, as French Maoism had little to do with Mao, French Trotskyism had little to do with Trotsky—the one representing a millennial populism, the other a non-Stalinist proletarian democracy.

It is not that an ex-Trotskyite is in any way expected to believe in Trotskyism. It is just that what the William Morris mailroom is to Hollywood, Trotskyism was to a generation in French politics and journalism. A French ex-Trotskyite would no more start working for world revolution than David Geffen, at a DreamWorks production meeting, would start sorting envelopes. There are even those who regard some part of French political-intellectual life today as a confrontation between ex-Maoists and ex-Trotskyites. The ex-Maoists tend to be humanitarian, idealistic, populist, and even a little mystical; Benny Levy, the Maoist leader who became a Talmudic philosopher, and André Glucksmann, the pro-Bush liberal interventionist, are both ex-Maoists. The ex-Trots tend to be more politicized, worldly, and militant in both senses.

Beyond the personalities and the oddities, it is possible to see in *Le Monde's* zigzaggings and changes of direction a clear and courageous political line. The only way to defend French singularity is to reform French institutions, and any force for reform in France, whether coming from the managerial end of the Gaullist right or from the populist end of the Labor left, is to be encouraged. The real plague that afflicts France is its *blocage*, an incapacity to move or change at all. Balladur or Bourdieu or Blair would do: what is needed is a model of radical reform.

So the question of Trotskyism is not completely beside the point; as Poulet says, it is a French singularity, and what really is at the heart of *l'affaire du Monde* is the question of just how singular French journalism should remain in order for France to remain a singular place. One need only look across the Channel at the London papers to see the fate that both sides fear and are seeking to avoid. Twenty-five years ago, the *Times* of London stood right beside *Le Monde* as a beacon of absolute, if slightly starchy, rectitude. Now it is just another Murdoch paper, stuffed full of color photographs and recipes and gossip about Posh and Becks, a tabloid in content and, as of last week, in form. That is the most probable fate of a serious newspaper at the beginning of the millennium, and it would be the end of something crucial.

At the paper's headquarters, on the Rue Claude-Bernard (it sold its original headquarters, on the Rue des Italiens, in 1985, and will be moving again, at the end of the year), the atmosphere is more like that of a think tank or a foundation than like that of a newspaper. Security is heavy, but it has been for a long time; since Algeria, *Le Monde* has been a regular target of demonstrations and threats.

The house style in the carpeted corridors, at least on a summer day, is calm and meditative. No one pounds his desk, no one yells, there are regular meetings and circulars. In bureaucratic organizations, things are accomplished in memos; in hierarchical ones, in meetings; and in academic-collegial ones, in the interstices between meetings and in the margins of memos. Any number of *Le Monde* anecdotes begin, "So afterward I asked Edwy what he meant by . . ." or "Jean-Marie came around before and he explained that . . ."

Colombani, for all that he is portrayed as a Corsican firebrand, is an engaging, wryly smiling executive—more a man of business than a man of power. "What is this French model we're being asked to defend?" he says with exasperation, pacing the floor of his office. "Do you know what it really is? It's simply a formula for mass unemployment. It's a way of enlisting people with jobs in a state of fear about their benefits, which makes it hard for there to be new jobs.

"*Le Monde* under my leadership set out to do two things: to get a more youthful audience before the audience left us, and to continue to play a role in the modernization of France. This newspaper's role was to play an independent but engaged part in the evolution of France. If it had stood aside and watched from on high, it would not have been right, and it would not have been *Le Monde*. First, we were there in the separation from Algeria, and then, in '81, to insist on the principle of alternating governments. Now we have tried to play a part in the 'revolt of the judges,' the achievement of judiciary

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"I never date—I'm too niche."

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"Of course," he goes on, and the laugh that italicizes his remark is more than a little bitter, "when people ask for more transparency from us, and then I look at the alternatives, well, I see more their opacity than any failure of ours. But I struggle to remember that it is normal after ten years, and useful, too, in a way, to have oneself put under interrogation—not by people such as these, surely, but as a general phenomenon. We have to rethink ourselves, and our role, and we are doing it."

People in Paris are more keenly aware of the crisis that the *Times* underwent than people in New York are aware of the crisis at *Le Monde*. (One of Colombani's achievements has been to bring a supplement of the *Times*, in English, into the pages of *Le Monde* every Saturday; he claims that it has been highly successful, particularly with young readers.) But the contrasts are as instructive as the parallels. The *Times* can and has tolerated any number of attacks on its biases or ideology, because it is convinced that it has none; but it was vulnerable to an attack on its veracity, even a slightly absurd and obviously isolated one, because its veracity, even on trivial matters, defined it. *Le Monde* could have tolerated any number of drunken journalists who faked a dateline, but was vulnerable when their probity, their moral elevation, their right to judge was publicly challenged. (No idiom is stronger in French life than "*le droit de donner des leçons*," "the right to preach.") A paper of record can't get the record wrong; a paper of reference must be the ultimate referee.

No one sees this more clearly than Alain Minc. He sits in his office beneath an enormous Richard Avedon diptych portrait of Samuel Beckett (head raised, head lowered; looking out woefully at the world and bowing his head in despair and self-renunciation). Minc has the kind of quick, paradox-savoring intelligence—the capacity, present even among men of power, to forget caution in the love of ironic wit and abstract thought—that assures the superiority, if not of French civilization, then of French conversation.

"Let's put aside for the moment the personalities and the particulars," he says, knowing that one of the particulars one has just put aside is him. "What do the three crises"—at the BBC, the *Times*, and *Le Monde*—"have in common? It is, I think, a perception of arrogance and the populist response. There are no plots of any kind involved, not from anyone. But there is a pattern. Throughout Europe and America, each institution of authority has been placed in question—the Royal Family, the political class, the Presidency of America, the Presidency of France, Vivendi and Enron—and each has had to bow down before the authority of popular opinion."

Minc even agrees in some small part with his critics: "The lesson is that if the press is perceived as a power—not a counter-power, but a power in itself—it will get the same scrutiny as the rest of the institutions of power and, since it has no obvious accountability, some rough accountability will be invented, even if it has some of the character of a lynching. In a strange way, it is a tribute to the authority of the three institutions, that they were one of the last places with a claim to objectivity or authority. The cure is not so much transparency as responsiveness. A newspaper can be a counter-power, but it must not become a power."

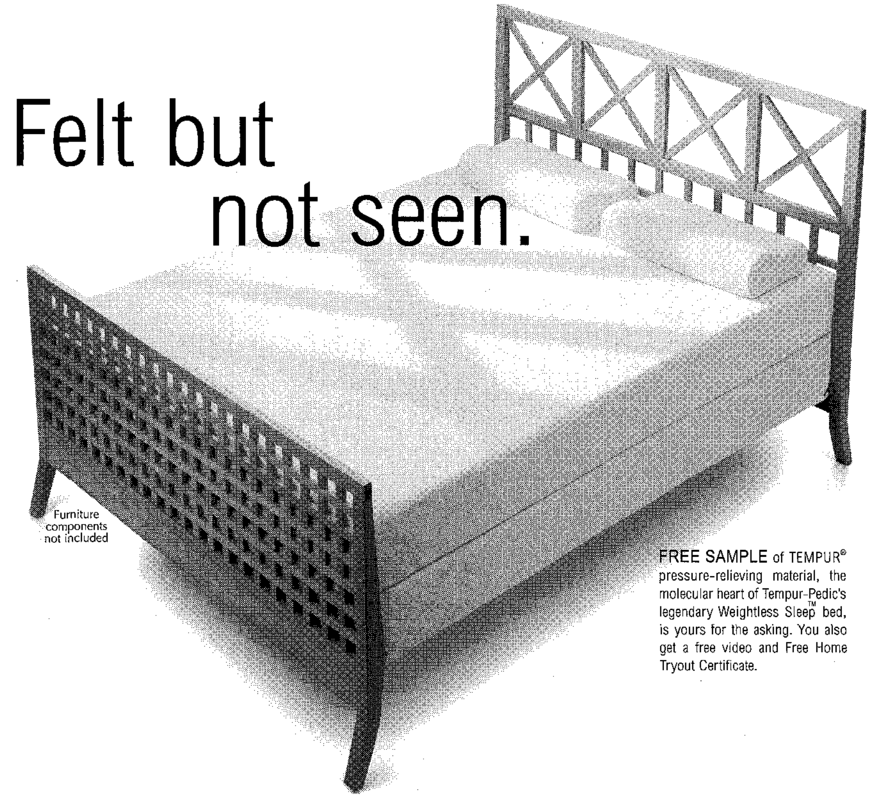
Finally, in June, the lawsuit was settled. The trio from *Le Monde* agreed to give up the suit, and not to "polemicize" any further; in exchange, Péan and Cohen agreed to abandon their book—not to allow any more copies to be printed, and to give up book-club, small-format editions, and so forth.

"It was a compromise that involved the abject surrender of both sides" was how one observer summed up the decision. Another said, "Péan and Cohen were discredited, certainly. But the idea that three or four men could use a newspaper to change the political life of France, not to divert it or reflect it but to change it—that is discredited now, too. It was an illusion from '68, when their generation did change the life of France, carried forward to another time and to an institution, and institutionalized revolution will not work."

"The real question that this business presents is about the nature of journalism at the turn of the millennium," Bernard Poulet says, in summary. "*Le Monde* convinced itself that great journalism was a steady diet of Watergates and exposés. But, really, what is a great newspaper? It isn't one that has exposés and revelations every day. It is one that has credibility, competence, and good writing. It is the daily drip of trustworthy competence and reliability that made the old *Le Monde* great. If we admire the *Financial Times* or *The Economist* or the New York *Times* or the *Guardian*, it isn't because they break story after story or make one man fall after another. It is because day in, day out, week in, week out, they promise a level of intelligent commentary and credible information. It may be that that model is finished, for complex reasons, and that it won't work. But this model, of the newspaper as inquisitor and moral arbiter—that won't work, either, not in the long run, as we see. As *they* see now."

Le Monde remains committed to its program of reform. Colombani, in his editorial last week on the American election, insisted on the shock of the result ("How can one, after all, explain this victory of a man who pell-mell dragged his country into a war unleashed in the name of a lie?") but also conceded the "incredible dynamism" of the American model, and saw it as a challenge to Europe—not least to increase its defense expenditures, so that future arguments about wars, right and wrong, would be conducted on a more equal basis. The new world of the twenty-first century "will not be constructed on the European model," he concluded. The paper was still insisting that, without radical reform of a creaky and complacent French model, there could be no relationship among equals, or near-equals, with America.

About the internal *affaire*, Colombani, bound by the judge's edict, says he has no summary to offer. "Right now," he says, "it is like a meteorological moment, where the storm clears and for one bright moment everything is clear. What is clear? Well, I'll have to take the . . . Second Amendment on that one." He catches himself and smiles. "That's the one saying you can have guns? Perhaps I'll take that one, too." ♦



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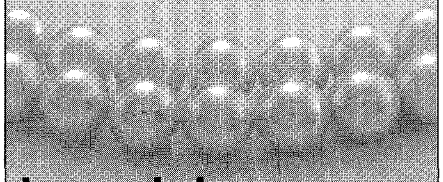

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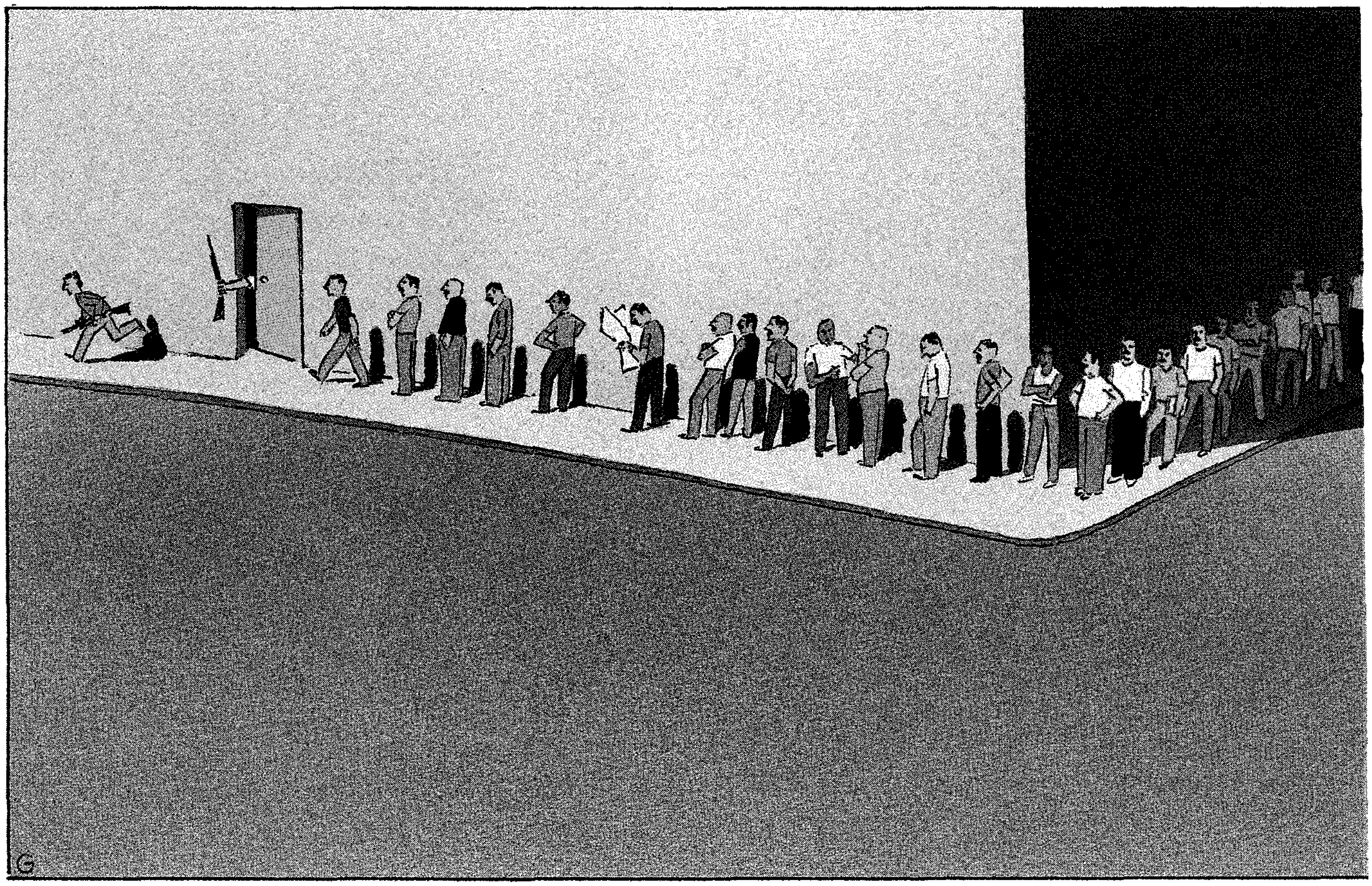


LETTER FROM IRAQ

OUT ON THE STREET

The United States' de-Baathification program fuelled the insurgency. Is it too late for Bush to change course?

BY JON LEE ANDERSON

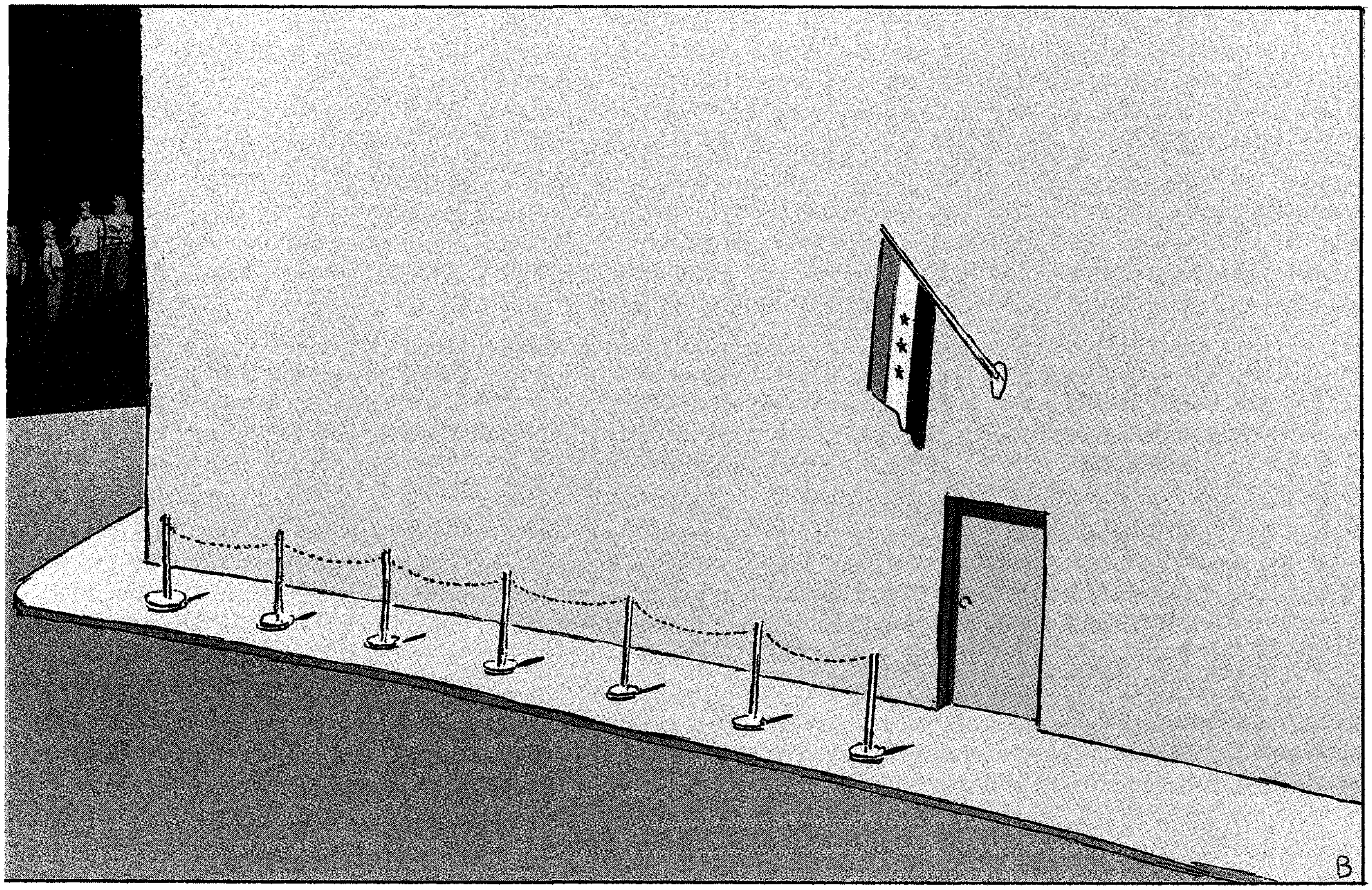
On April 19, 2003, ten days after the fall of Baghdad, an advance "jump group" of Americans commanded by retired Lieutenant General Jay Garner was flown into the city to manage the occupation of Iraq. One of the first to arrive was Stephen Browning, whose previous assignment had been as director of programs on the West Coast for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Two months earlier, Browning had been summoned to Washington to join a group of experts charged with planning for postwar Iraq. Within a day or two of his arrival in Baghdad, Browning was given the job of getting the Ministry of Health up and running.

Baghdad's hospitals were in a calamitous state. Many had been looted, and the doctors and nurses had fled. In the Shiite slum of Saddam (now Sadr) City, home to two million people, clerics and armed vigilantes loyal to the radical Shiite Moqtada al-Sadr had taken control of the medical facilities. "When I went into the Ministry of Health, there was no clear leader, no one willing to say, 'I represent the Iraqis for the health ministry,'" Browning recalled. "Then Dr. Ali Shinan al-Janabi, an optometrist who had been a deputy minister, stepped forward. He told us that he was a member of the Baath Party. And—well, the fact is there was no one else to go to. I asked around, did a lot of research, and almost everyone I spoke to seemed to regard him as an honorable figure, even though he was a Baathist. And, after getting to know him, I came to feel he was a brave and admirable man."

Browning decided early on that in order to get things done he needed to work with members of the Baath Party. The Party had been virtually synonymous with Saddam Hussein's regime; it was the instrument through which Iraqis were brutalized. At the same time, its members filled jobs at every level of society and anchored the middle class. On his own initiative, Browning says, he asked Shinan to sign a letter renouncing his membership in the Baath Party. Shinan did so, and Garner named him the acting Minister of Health. "We started working together," Browning said. "We made real progress in a very short amount of time."

A few weeks later, Browning and Shinan held a press conference. A reporter from the BBC asked Shinan if he was a Baathist. "He said he was, but that he had signed a letter of renunciation," Browning told me. "The BBC guy insisted, though. 'Will you denounce the Baath Party in front of us right now?' Ali's response was 'This is not an issue

GUY BILLOUT



"Once these guys realized they had been shut out, they just went for it," an American officer said of the former Baathists.

right now; we need to move on with the emergencies we have facing us.' And then he said, 'I was just doing my job.'

"The minute I heard him say that—it sounded so close to what the Nazi sympathizers said in their own defense in Germany after the Second World War—I knew how it would sound to the press outside Iraq, in the West, and I knew right then and there that Ali's political career was finished," Browning said. "I walked out of the conference with him hand in hand, and the next morning told him what we had to do. Ali was fine about it; he asked only that he be allowed to continue working as an optometrist. I agreed. Ali said, 'You are my brother.' We both had tears in our eyes."

Still, Browning was troubled by Shinan's refusal to denounce the Baath Party, and he asked him why he hadn't. "He told me that if he did so in public the vengeance on his family would be catastrophic. Which is probably true. There was nobody stopping anything from happening back then—our troops weren't much in the way of a protection force."

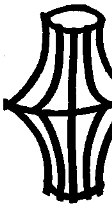
Browning asked Shinan to continue to assist him, and he agreed. A few days later, he disappeared. Browning later learned that Shinan and his family had left Baghdad. By then, an assassination campaign had begun against former Baathists who were coöperating with the occupation, and also against some who weren't. The victims of the campaign, which is ongoing, have included doctors, engineers, and teachers, sparking an exodus of Iraqi professionals to other countries.

Not long after, Garner himself was fired, and President Bush named L. Paul Bremer III as the head of what became known as the Coalition Provisional Authority. On May 16, 2003, Bremer issued a sweeping ban of the Baath Party: all senior party members were barred from public life; lower-level members were also barred, but some could appeal. In effect, Bremer had fired the entire senior civil service. The origins of the decree have never been clarified, but Coalition officials I spoke to said they believed that Bremer was following orders from the White House. A week later, he disbanded the Iraqi Army.

Browning recalled a meeting that he and other officials had with Bremer before the announcement. "Bremer walked in and announced his de-Baathification order. I said that we had established a good working relationship with technicians—not senior-level people—of the Baath Party, and I expressed my feeling that this measure could backfire. Bremer said that it was not open for discussion, that this was what was going to be done and his expectation was that we would carry it out. It was not a long meeting."

The order had an immediate effect on Browning's work. "We had a lot of directors general of hospitals who were very good, and, with de-Baathification, we lost them and their expertise overnight," he told me. At the Ministry of Transportation and Communications, which was another of his responsibilities, "we were left dealing with what seemed like the fifth string. . . . Nobody who was left knew anything."

An American special-forces officer stationed in Baghdad at the time told me that he was stunned by Bremer's twin decrees. After the dissolution of the Army, he said, "I had my guys coming up to me and saying, 'Does Bremer realize that there are four hundred thousand of these guys out there and they all have guns?' They all have to feed their families." He went on, "The problem with the blanket ban is that you get rid of the infrastructure; I mean, after all, these guys ran the country, and you polarize them. So did these decisions contribute to the insurgency? Unequivocally, yes. And we have to ask ourselves: How well did we really know how to run Iraq? Zero."



The officer recalled that after Bremer's decrees the looting of the city "became increasingly professional and organized, and it became not just looting but sabotage, too, and I think a lot of this had to do with the decisions that put all of these guys out of work." In Baghdad, he saw a truck drive past him loaded with artillery shells, apparently looted from an armory. There were many such armories throughout Iraq, such as Al-Qaqaa, where three hundred and eighty tons of powerful explosives went missing. "Once these guys realized they had been shut out, they just went for it," he said.

From the beginning, the question for the U.S. and British coalition was how to build a secure, stable, and democratic Iraq while dealing with the vacuum created by the fall of Saddam. The Baath Party, which kept its records secret, is estimated to have had between a million and two and a half million members, most of them Sunnis, like Saddam. For Iraq's traditionally excluded and suppressed Shiite majority and for the Kurdish minority, de-Baathification was an urgent goal. But the Coalition also needed to address the fears of the newly disenfranchised Sunnis, and, on a basic level, to keep the country functioning. Given the difficulty of the project, the occupation policies were markedly lacking in pragmatism.

During that first summer, an array of Sunni tribal leaders, religious leaders, Baathists, and former intelligence officials were openly shuttling around Baghdad, lobbying the Americans for a better deal. They saw themselves as having been treated unfairly, and many hinted that they would participate in the growing revolt if they were not given a place in the "new Iraq."

"Bremer seems to be interested only in de-Baathification," said Dr. Baher Sami Raphael Butti, an Iraqi psychiatrist whom I met with in July, 2003. "And this is a problem, because there are many Baathists who could help, but they have been thrown away. Many are fighting because they have not received their salaries, and they feel threatened by the fundamentalist Shia. I am a Baathist, by the way, but not a dogmatic one. Most Iraqis, including the Baathists, hated Saddam. Now they are frightened about the prospect of civil war." He went on, "We need to know what's going to happen. There is no transparency to the American role in Iraq, and this gives rise to more rumors. We need to know more."

In a sense, the "insurgency" began before Baghdad fell. Religious jihadis—would-be martyrs from other Arab nations—had been recruited by Saddam's government to carry out "suicide operations" against the Americans. Many of them were young men with full beards, dressed in traditional robes. In Baghdad, where most Iraqi men were relatively clean-shaven and wore Western dress, the jihadis stood out as foreigners and were plainly visible until a few hours before the Marines arrived; a number were staying in the same hotels as Western reporters. The morning Baghdad fell, I saw about sixty of them slip away. The evidence suggests that they regrouped clandestinely under Baathist recruiters and helped to build the insurgency. Most of the Baathists I spoke to acknowledged a tactical alliance between their own resistance and the foreign Islamist militants.

In August, 2003, I spoke to Bremer at his office in one of Saddam's old palaces inside Baghdad's Green Zone, where the Coalition had set up its base. No one on the American side was yet using the term "insurgency" to characterize the rapidly escalating attacks against American troops in Baghdad and in cities like Falluja, in the so-called Sunni triangle. "What we're faced with is the remnants of a Saddam regime composed of extremists and some terrorists," Bremer told me. "Their real target is the Iraqi people."

Bremer's office resembled a field commander's bivouac, with worn-looking military apparel stuffed on bookshelves. "Being an occupying power is not a comfortable thing for most Americans to comprehend, and it certainly is the case that when you are an occupying power you have not only responsibilities but, as you exercise those responsibilities, you're going to have friction," Bremer said. "It happens. More people get killed in New York every night than get killed in Baghdad. The fact of life is that there will never be such a thing as one hundred per cent security—it doesn't exist."

When I spoke to Bremer, fewer than three hundred American troops had been killed in Iraq. By last week, more than eleven hundred had lost their lives, and the insurgency had gained force. I asked Richard Haass, the head of the Council on Foreign Relations and a former State Department official, how the reëlection of President Bush might change the dynamic. "The security priority is to get the Iraqis to assume the lion's share of that task," he said. "That means training as many Iraqi police and security forces as quickly as you can. It also means putting as much pressure on Zarqawi's people as you can—killing as many of them as you can." He was referring to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the Jordanian terrorist whose militant group is believed to be responsible for a series of beheadings and car bombings.

But Haass added that the Administration still had to come to terms with Iraq's ethnic equation: "On elections, it means not just going ahead with them but persuading the Sunnis to participate. And on the military the question is whether the Administration can go after those who are using violence, who are disrupting day-to-day life, in a way that doesn't create even more Sunni nationalist opposition."

This summer, I visited the Supreme National Commission for De-Baathification, which occupied two floors of a concrete office block inside the Green Zone. A poster on one wall bore the simple message "Baathists=Nazis." The director of the commission, Mithal al-Alusi, is a tall, lanky man of fifty-three who speaks English with a syrupy drawl and, even in the office, wears a pistol tucked into his belt.

Alusi is a protégé of Ahmad Chalabi, the leader of the Iraqi National Congress, the exile group favored by the Pentagon before the war. Chalabi had been appointed chairman of the commission in September, 2003. Since then, he had lost much of his influence, in part because intelligence concerning Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, which he promoted, had proved useless. In June, when sovereignty was transferred to Iyad Allawi, a rival of Chalabi's with ties to the C.I.A., not a single member of the I.N.C. was given a post in the new government. But Chalabi's access to the de-Baathification commission—and to the files of thousands of Baathists—gave him continued leverage. (When I saw Chalabi in Iraq this summer, he pulled out the intelligence dossier of a senior member of Allawi's government and translated what he claimed was damaging information about him.)

The commission began its work in January, and Alusi told me that it had achieved a great deal: "Thirty-five thousand Baath Party members have left their jobs." Alusi said that the commission was interested only in Baathists from the four highest levels of the Party, some sixty-five thousand people. The top level consisted of no more than fifty or sixty people. "Level 2 is a few hundred people, Level 3 is a few thousand, and at the fourth level there are tens of thousands," he said. Level 4 Baathists were allowed to appeal their bans, and, so far, the commission had approved about half of the appeals. Alusi said that the commission was not inflexible; he described one instance in which seventy doctors had been sent back to work. "We expedited their cases," he said. "We just made sure they weren't killers."

Alusi told me that he had been a Baathist once himself, and had worked at the Party's top-secret academy for political cadres. He had fallen out with the regime in the seventies, however, and spent more than twenty years in exile, mostly in Germany. In August, 2002, Alusi and a few cohorts briefly seized Iraq's Embassy in Berlin, for which they were arrested and spent thirteen months in prison. When Alusi was released, in September, 2003, he returned to Iraq, violating his parole.

I asked Alusi what Baathism had meant to him as a young man. "It was like magic," he said. "The Baath Party gave us the opportunity to do something important." One of the opportunities enjoyed by young Baathists was access to power. Under Saddam, the Party was melded with the secret police and the state intelligence organization. Membership was a requirement for many government jobs, and Baathists were required to inform on their neighbors, their co-workers, and one another. During one of Saddam's hallmark purges in 1979, several ministers were handed weapons and ordered to kill colleagues whom Saddam had just declared to be "traitors."

One of the steps in the appeals process for former Baathists was attendance at a thirty-day de-Baathification course, and I asked Alusi what model he had used for it. "I've studied the de-Nazification of Germany," he said. "And I've e-mailed Jewish Holocaust organizations, although only one of them answered me. We've read a lot of books."

A few days later, I attended a graduation ceremony in a seminar room at Baghdad University, where a hundred or so middle-aged men and women, most of them professors and doctors, sat expectantly. Alusi walked in with a half-dozen bodyguards. He took the microphone, smiled, and began to talk in a rambling fashion about how the United States had liberated Iraqis, how the Coalition was on a par with the alliance against Hitler, and how Iraq now depended upon the good will of the U.S.

Men from Alusi's office began taping posters to the wall behind the stage. The posters showed decayed bodies and skeletons piled in unearthed mass graves, and they elicited muffled exclamations from the audience. A man raised his hand. "Why are you putting up those posters?" he asked. "Everyone here was *forced* to join the Baath Party. We didn't have anything to do with those crimes."

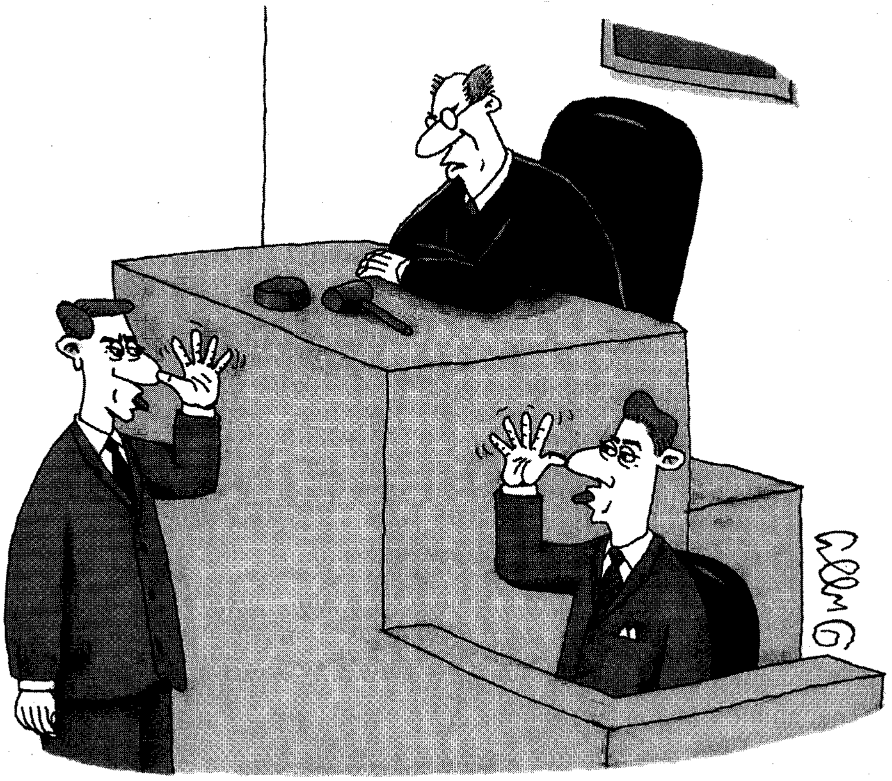
"These are the bodies of Iraqis," Alusi replied. "Why shouldn't we look at them?"

A man called out, "Mr. Alusi, I feel frightened when I see these pictures. Many people may not distinguish between the criminals who did these things and innocent people like us."

"The Iraqi people are not idiots," Alusi replied. "I know there are good citizens among you, but we cannot close the files, because the files are full of crimes. The problem is for those who committed crimes. What shall I do, put away the posters, omit the truth? No, we cannot. If we omit this, we omit our history."

The man smiled politely but didn't say anything. Alusi stood up, and the people in the room filed over to officials sitting at tables to obtain their de-Baathification certificates.

Later, Alusi told me that he had meant to be provocative. "There is a duality in Baathists," he said. "You can find a Baathist who is a killer, but at home, with his family, he's completely normal. It's like they split their day into two twelve-hour blocks. When people say about someone I know to be a Baathist criminal, 'No, he's



"Don't make me come down there."

"Good coffee."

a good neighbor!' I believe them. The Baath Party is like the Nazi Party, or like the Mafia. If you meet them, they are simpatico. And this is why it's very difficult for us to do our work, which is to change—really change—Iraqi society."

Alusi wasn't alone in drawing analogies to the de-Nazification process in Germany after the Second World War. But the comparison is less helpful than it seems. De-Nazification was marked by ambiguities, exceptions, compromises. And, to the extent that it worked, it did so because the Nazis had so catastrophically failed. Germany was utterly defeated; millions of people had died, and its cities lay in ruins. The country was rebuilt and transformed under the U.S.-administered Marshall Plan.

In the 2003 war, Iraq's Army was not militarily defeated, because, by and large, it did not fight. Its forces melted away. Since then, the Coalition has failed to secure the country. The U.S. occupation has galvanized a sense of national resistance and had the neat effect of making Iraq's history seem, to many Iraqis, irrelevant. As long as American troops remain, most Iraqis will likely continue to see themselves only as victims.

In the weeks before and after the American invasion, I spent a good deal of time with a senior Baathist, an official in the Foreign Ministry named Samir Khairi, whom I had met through a mutual friend. Khairi, a tall, jovial man in his early fifties, had droopy brown eyes and a great beak of a nose that was underscored by a clipped handlebar mustache. He spoke French and English, drank Scotch, and laughed a lot, with a loud honk. Unlike most Iraqi officials I interviewed, he showed no anger at the prospect of an American invasion. Khairi invited me to dinner at his home, a brown stucco house in the upscale neighborhood of Mansour. The house was a congenial mess, with piles of papers and clothes everywhere.

Khairi told me that he had become a Baathist in 1973, when he was a student at Baghdad University. Opportunism aside, the Party offered a nationalist ideology that appealed to him. The Baath Party—*baath* means "renaissance" in Arabic—was founded in Syria, in 1947, as a political vehicle to promote Pan-Arabism. In the fifties, Syrian exiles and Iraqi students brought Baathism to Iraq, which was then ruled by a military government. The Baathists came to power in 1963, in a coup that was followed by a bloodbath during which Baathists arrested, tortured, and killed their rivals. In 1968, in another coup, Saddam Hussein's wing of the Baath Party took control of the country, and in 1979 Saddam declared himself President.

In 1981, Khairi, who was finishing a Ph.D. in law and had begun editing a Baathist newspaper, was summoned to meet Saddam's half brother Barzan al-Tikriti. Barzan was then the head of the Mukhabarat, the Iraqi secret police. He proposed that Khairi become the editor-in-chief of an Arabic-language magazine based in Paris, and, Khairi said, assured him that he would not be required to do intelligence work, although his magazine, *Kul al-Arab* (All the Arabs), would be funded by the Mukhabarat.

When Khairi speaks of his Paris years—as he often does, with great nostalgia—he refers to himself as having been a journalist. But, of course, his magazine was principally a propaganda arm of Saddam's regime. His tenure coincided with the Iran-Iraq War, which Saddam launched in 1980. This was the period during which Saddam actually did possess weapons of mass destruction, and used them against the Iranians on the battlefield and then in the genocidal Anfal campaign against his own country's Kurdish citizens. Khairi told me that Barzan was personally involved in the torture and execution of hundreds of Iraqis—crimes for which he is soon to stand trial.

After the first Gulf War began, in 1991, the French authorities closed *Kul al-Arab*, arrested Khairi as a spy, and deported him. (Khairi insists that the charges were false.) When he returned to Baghdad, he continued working for the Mukhabarat, in its Presidential Research Institute. Eventually, he became estranged from Barzan and, in 1999, was briefly imprisoned. He stayed at the research institute until late 2002, when he became the press director of the Foreign Ministry. He said that he was relieved to be free of intelligence work and that, before the war, he had hoped to be given an ambassadorship.

One day when I was at Khairi's house, we watched a news bulletin that contained footage of a mass grave being uncovered in south-central Iraq. I asked Khairi why he hadn't fled the country, as so many other Iraqis had done, instead of continuing to work for Saddam. "Oh, I had no choice," he said. "I was afraid for my family. If I were to go, they'd have hurt them. And if I stayed here and didn't do my work they could kill me anytime. They killed many people."

I asked him how many people he thought Saddam had killed. Half a million?

"Oh no, not so many," he replied.

"Around one hundred thousand, maybe one hundred and twenty thousand, for sure." He said this matter-of-factly, with no indication that he felt tainted by the crimes of the regime. (Khairi's numbers were off: a likelier figure is around two hundred and fifty thousand, and estimates range much higher.)

Khairi told me he believed that the ideals of Baathism had been betrayed under Saddam Hussein, that the Party had been taken over, and that Saddam's family held the only real power. But Khairi was part of Saddam's apparatus and, by his own admission, was proud of the work he did. He once told me, "I did good work in strategic planning for the President, and he liked it—three times, after reading my papers, he sent me a half-million dinars as a present."

This kind of dissociative thinking—and a certain remorselessness—was, in my experience, common among Baathists, and especially among Sunnis like Khairi. Most echoed Saddam's justifications that the victims, who were primarily Kurds and Shiites, had betrayed the fatherland by siding with Iran, were thieves and looters, were not real Muslims, and had committed a host of other supposed crimes.

I visited Khairi frequently that spring. There were always several other guests in the house—all of them men, who would come to eat, watch Al Jazeera and CNN, and talk about the news. Khairi had been allowed to have a satellite dish, a privilege reserved for senior Baathists, and he was a generous host. His friends would complain about the looting, or about former exiles like Chalabi, but over all they were optimistic about the future. Most of them were, like Khairi, Baathist functionaries or former military officers, and they all seemed to have accepted Saddam's fall from power as a fait accompli. Most appeared to believe that they would be receiving a summons from the C.P.A. to return to their jobs any day.

After Bremer's decrees, however, Khairi's optimism vanished. When I visited him, I often found him sitting around the house in the middle of the day, flipping the channels on his TV. He had been told that he was not going to get his job back, or receive a pension, and he was despondent.

In July, 2003, Khairi was arrested by American soldiers. The house in Mansour was trashed and looted; when I arrived, even the doors to the garage were gone. No one seemed to know where he was being held, and although I made inquiries with Coalition officials, I couldn't find out anything, either.

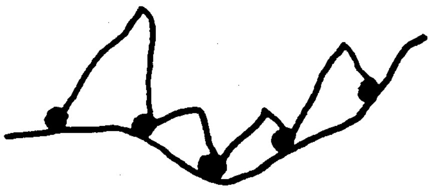
Almost a year later, I heard that Khairi had been released and was in Amman, Jordan. I arranged to meet him there at a hotel. When he walked in, I was shocked by his appearance. He was well dressed, with carefully pressed trousers, but his face was much thinner and his eyes had dark rings around them.

On the night of July 19, 2003, Khairi said, American soldiers kicked in the front door to his house, dragged him out to the street in his pajamas, and threw him to the ground as his neighbors watched. When he asked a soldier why he was being arrested, the soldier bashed him several times with his rifle. He was left with four broken ribs.

Khairi was held in an Army detention center without food and with little water for twenty-four hours. He was then taken, with some other prisoners, to a facility in Kadhimiya, the former headquarters of Saddam's military-intelligence service. "We were put in a cell with no toilet," Khairi said. "We had to use the floor, like dogs."

Khairi was interrogated by a female American soldier who had papers that had been taken from his house, including a copy of an article I had written for this magazine, in which Khairi was quoted expressing his loyalty to the Baath Party. Khairi told her about the soldier hitting him and asked to see a doctor. "She said, 'Really,' " Khairi said, lifting his eyebrows in an imitation of a skeptical expression. A few hours later, Khairi was taken to a detention facility at the Baghdad airport, a large open-air camp with tents surrounded by razor wire. He fell asleep on the ground around 4 A.M. "I was in very bad shape," he recalled. "I was very dirty. We'd had no water to clean ourselves."

In the morning, the other prisoners in his tent elected Khairi to represent them in a meeting with the Red Cross, since he spoke French and English, but during the meeting he fainted. When he came to, he was taken to a medical tent, where a doctor immediately put an I.V. in each arm and began to feed him. Khairi repeated this story to me several times, emphasizing how caring the doctor had been.



A few days later, Khairi was interrogated again. "This was my most important interrogation, and it lasted about three hours." He said that an American in civilian clothes told him, "If you don't speak the truth, I will kill you." Khairi went on, "He asked if when I was in Paris I had had any relations with Al Qaeda."

At this point, Khairi laughed. "Can you imagine, Al Qaeda! I reminded him that I had returned from Paris in 1991, when there was no Al Qaeda. He didn't like that, and said, 'O.K., then, if not Al Qaeda, did you have relations with any other terrorist groups? Did Saddam Hussein ask you to meet or give money to any other groups?' I asked him, 'Which terror groups do you mean?' And he became angry and repeated that I should answer his questions or he'd kill me."

Khairi was then taken to a detention center in Bukka, in the desert south of Basra. Five days after he arrived, he had a heart attack. He was treated at a hospital in Basra, then returned to Bukka. There, after being held for several days in a tent, Khairi was interrogated by another officer. "For the first time, I was with somebody who was very clever. When he heard that I had been mistreated when I was arrested, he wanted to know the name of the unit that was responsible, and told me I had the right to press charges. I asked him if there was any evidence against me. He said no."

At the end of August, Khairi's wife was allowed to visit. She told him that his father had died after hearing of his arrest. That afternoon, Khairi had a second heart attack. He stayed at Bukka for two months and then, on November 4th, he was sent to Abu Ghraib.

When Khairi and other prisoners arrived at Abu Ghraib, he said, "the guards took everything we had brought with us from Bukka—all of our clothes, everything. They left us in our pajamas. An American soldier—a big fat guy—took the reading glasses my wife had brought to me and stomped on them. The translator said to us, 'This is not Bukka. That was a five-star hotel. This is Abu Ghraib.' They took my medicines. It was cold, and we slept in a tent, on the ground."

Khairi's heart problems became worse, and he was medevaced out of the camp twice. Khairi said that although many of the Americans he had met at the clinics where he was treated had been kind, some military policemen with German shepherds would barge in and allow their dogs to terrorize the patients. (It was only later that he learned about the torture and sexual humiliation of prisoners at Abu Ghraib.) Once, he had seen a hooded, half-naked prisoner being herded by American soldiers into a wooden trailer, and leave some time later, hobbling as if in great pain. But, he said, "I don't know what they did to him."

Khairi was bewildered by the demeaning treatment of Iraqi prisoners. "The young men in my tents told me they were just waiting for the day they would get out so they could fight," he said. "In the early days at Bukka, the Shia prisoners were not too much against the Americans, but after a few months even they changed their minds. I'd say that about ninety-five per cent of the Shia I met were talking about taking revenge."

Almost every day, there were mortar attacks, Khairi recalled. "We noticed that they only attacked the American positions inside the prison, not where the prisoners were. The Iraqis were very happy when the attacks occurred. Some of them yelled, '*Allahu Akbar!*' and said, 'This is God's punishment to the Americans for their ill-treatment of us.' Once the attacks became more frequent, they began hooding us whenever we went anywhere because the prisoners were telling their visiting relatives the Americans' positions."

Khairi was held at Abu Ghraib for three and a half months without seeing his family; he found out later that they had tried to see him many times, and had been told that he wasn't there. He was finally released in February, dressed only in a hospital gown.

Last April, two months before the C.P.A. was dissolved and in the midst of a dramatic upsurge in the violence in Iraq, Paul Bremer announced measures that softened his original decree against the Baathists. He said that although "the de-Baathification policy was and is sound," it had been "poorly implemented." He noted the importance of getting teachers and professors back in their jobs.

Bremer's announcement was widely interpreted as a move to give Allawi, the incoming Prime Minister, a freer hand to combat the insurgents by bringing Baathists back into government. In May, after the Marines' siege of Falluja was suspended—it is estimated that between six hundred and eight hundred Iraqis and forty Americans died during the siege—the Coalition appointed a so-called Falluja Brigade, led by former Baathists, to broker peace. The effort failed, however, when many of the Brigade members joined the insurgents.

Since assuming office, at the end of June, Allawi has appointed a number of Baathists to senior positions—most significantly, in the military and intelligence apparatus. He has also taken steps to weaken Chalabi further. In October, after a private visit to Israel by Mithal al-Alusi, Chalabi's ally on the de-Baathification commission, an Iraqi judge issued a warrant for Alusi's arrest, invoking a Baathist-era law prohibiting travel to the Jewish state. Alusi telephoned me from Baghdad to say that he was determined to fight the charges. He added that Allawi's government had cancelled the credentials for all but fifty of the two hundred members of the de-Baathification commission, suspended its funding, and dislodged its members from their offices.

Dan Senor, the former chief spokesman for the Coalition, is now in Washington, where he still speaks to Bremer regularly. At the end of August, I asked Senor how, on balance, Bremer now judged his decrees. After consulting with Bremer, Senor said, "Was it the right thing to do? Yes. We've had a militia problem in Iraq, but it would have been worse if we hadn't tackled this early on. For instance, the Shia could have been an enormous stumbling block to the Coalition if they had been uncoöperative, and yet we had clerics in their mosques telling people to forgo violence! And this was a tremendous support to the Coalition. If we had held back on de-Baathification, some have argued that the Sunni insurgency would not have been as bad, but, in the complete picture, the fact that this meant so much to the Shia was crucial."

At the time we spoke, the Marines were engaged in bloody confrontation with Moqtada al-Sadr's Shiite militia in Najaf. But Coalition officials I spoke to argued that Najaf was, with the media's encouragement, a distraction from the greater threat posed by Zarqawi. However, in addition to Zarqawi's group there are many Sunni guerrilla cells also operating in Falluja, as well as in the cities of Ramadi, Samarra, Baquba, and Mosul. Those cells are composed mostly of Iraqis, and, according to Baathists and to American officers I spoke with, at least some of them are funded and organized by former Baathists.

Senor said, "The problems we have today with the Sunni insurgency I don't attribute solely to de-Baathification. These are not people who are simply up in arms because they are out of a job. We were always under the impression that the violence was being organized by people fundamentally opposed to our vision of Iraq. They were not people we could win over."

This is a point of contention with Baathists, as well as with many non-Baathists. In Amman, I spoke to Mudher Khairbit, a wealthy Iraqi businessman who is a senior sheikh of the Dulaimi, a Sunni tribe heavily involved in guerrilla activity in and around Falluja and Ramadi. He told me that although he was not a Baathist he believed that the ban had been a mistake. Khairbit said, "By banning the Baath Party, the Americans made it more powerful, more popular."

In Baghdad, I had attended a Friday prayer session at a mosque led by Imam Abdul Salaam Daud al-Qubeisi, a prominent Sunni cleric. He sermonized against the American "occupiers" while lauding "heroic resistance fighters" in Falluja and Ramadi. A few days later, I visited Qubeisi at his house. He portrayed the resistance as a spontaneous uprising by ordinary Iraqis. "Before, the Iraqi people didn't think they were able to confront the American troops, but the hatred they feel encourages them to show resistance," he said. "What makes matters worse is that Bremer deals with Iraq as if it were Afghanistan. This is a big mistake. Al Qaeda's members were fighting outside their own countries, but the Iraqi soldiers are not. They are in their own homeland. No Iraqis went to New York to hit it."

I asked Qubeisi if he advocated the killing of American soldiers. His reply was ambiguous: "We have a code: He who is not fighting cannot sit in judgment of someone who does. Perhaps he is defending his family and his honor."

When I saw Khairi in Amman in June, he was living in a rented room on money that he had borrowed from his brother, and was looking for a job. He said that he had left Iraq after learning that a Shiite group had put his name on a death list. For now, he was part of the growing exodus of educated Iraqis. "Everyone who can leave is leaving," he said. "All the good people."

Much of the Baathist opposition was being mounted, Khairi said, by the new exiles. He predicted that, when the Americans handed over control of Iraq's cities to the new Iraqi security forces, later that month, the Baath Party would "return and attack those policemen." (Since then, hundreds of Iraqi policemen, National Guardsmen, and recruits have been killed in near-daily attacks.) He added, "The Americans must get over their problem with the Baath Party. We cannot change our name just to please them." He talked about the outbreak of a civil war in Iraq if the Americans continued to favor Shiites over the Sunnis.

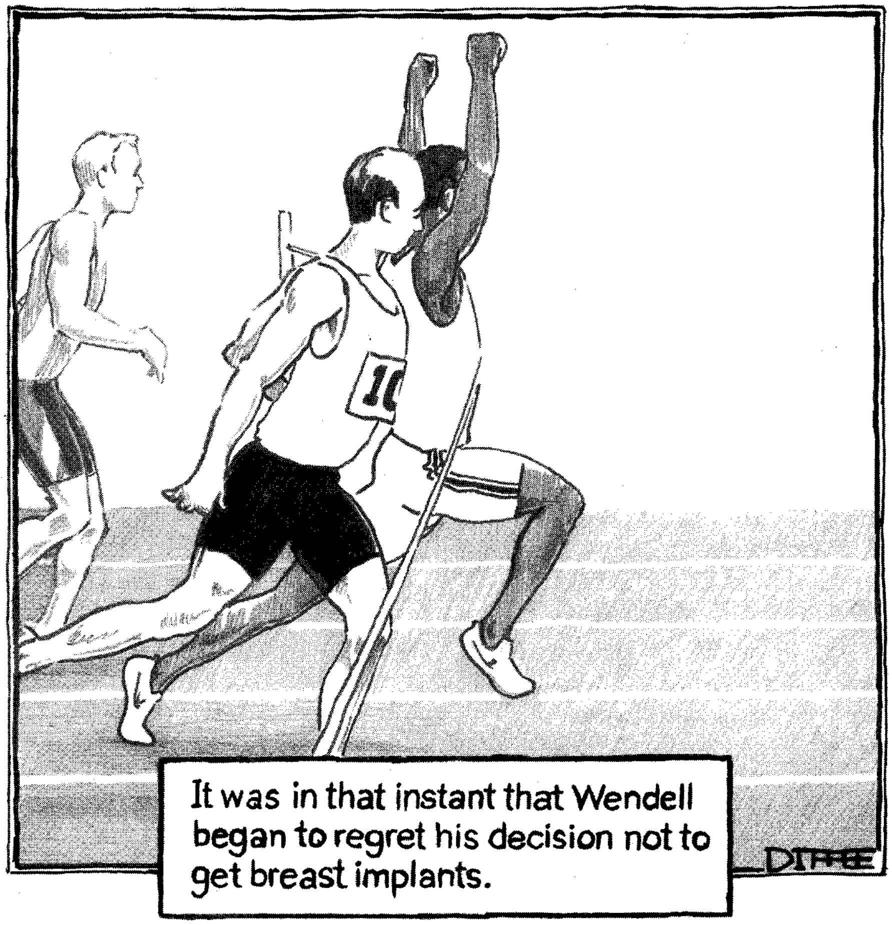
Khairi helped me to arrange a meeting with Samir Sheikhly, a former mayor of Baghdad, who, I had been told, was one of the key people in the underground Baath Party leadership. Sheikhly had been a senior member of the regime until 1991, when he fell out with Saddam and was put under house arrest. Sheikhly was arrested by the Americans in June, 2003, and spent four and a half months in prison.

When we met, Sheikhly told me, "Many Baathists welcomed the arrival of the Americans. They didn't fear the Americans when they came. If they had, they would have resisted, and it would have been very difficult to take Baghdad. But then the Americans began arresting Baath Party members." He went on, "The Americans are dealing with people who have come from outside the country and have no political base in Iraq. They cannot be successful in this way." Sheikhly dismissed Allawi's overtures to Baath Party members and said that only "collaborators" were dealing with him. "If the Americans coöperate and let the Baath Party back, they can secure their interests in Iraq at a very cheap price," he said. (Several Baathists I spoke to claimed that, in the last few weeks, there had been tentative talks with American officials.) Sheikhly did not address the Shiites' and Kurds' opposition to the Baathists. Like so many Baathists I talked to, he also refused to acknowledge that simply reinstating the Party might be morally or politically unacceptable to Saddam's victims and to the international community—that a regime that was little more than "Saddam Lite" might not be good enough.

One high-ranking former official of Saddam's Foreign Ministry told me, "The problem cannot be solved by the reincorporation of a few high-level Baathists. It's a problem of national reconciliation. The Americans made a big mistake by initiating the de-Baathification process; it was antidemocratic and inhumane, and it did not take into account who the Baathists are. After thirty-five years, the Baath Party had become part of the fabric of Iraqi society, a complex, interrelated pyramid of economic, political, religious, and tribal links, with the President, yes, at the top. . . . But to dismantle the Party, the Army, and other structures of the state was only to replace them with chaos."

The insurgency has clearly moved beyond the Baathists; the stakes are much higher now. Last week, a large-scale offensive against Falluja seemed imminent, with American troops moving into position. The American special-forces officer told me that he and others were hopeful that, with the election over, the White House would give its full backing for a decisive battle: "By being aggressive, it may be tough, bloody, and unpopular at first, but it will knock the terrorists off balance and create the space for success. The longer we wait, the more difficult, costly, and bloody it will be."

Last month, I asked Stephen Browning how he viewed the situation in Iraq. He replied, "I spoke to an Iraqi doctor friend last week and I asked him the same question. He said to me, 'The country is slowly dying.' He was always an optimist before, so to hear him say this was just so dispiriting to me. My own sense is that I don't see a good, positive way ahead. There were so many opportunities that were lost in the early days. Now that this insurgency has grown so big, I don't know what we can do to stop it." ♦



It was in that instant that Wendell began to regret his decision not to get breast implants.

ANNALS OF TRANSPORT

TIGHT-ASSED RIVER

Two hundred feet to the gallon.

BY JOHN McPHEE

PEKIN

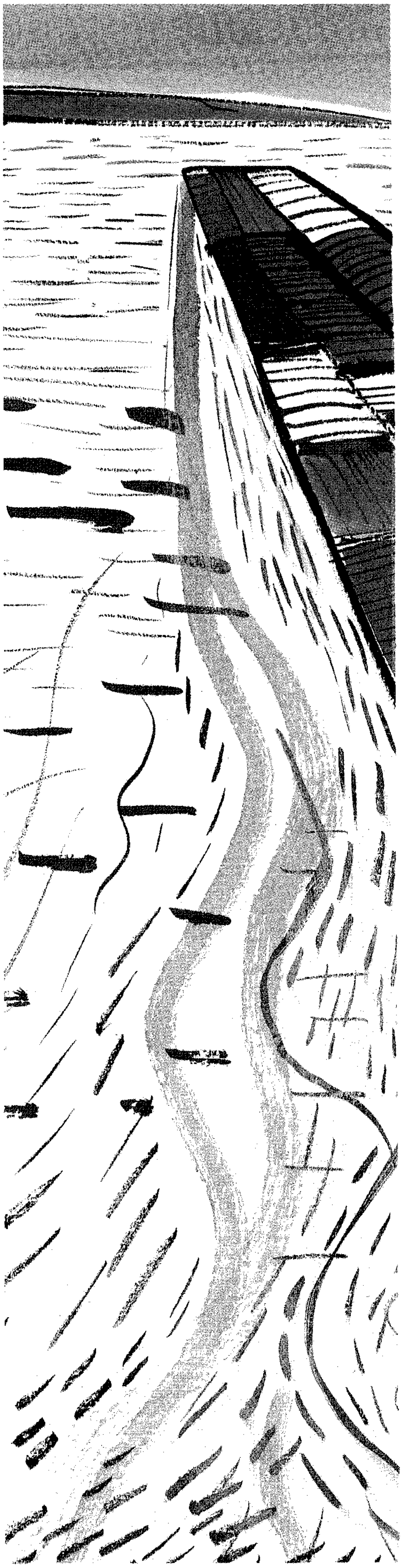
The "Pekin wiggles" are halfway up the Illinois River, between the Mississippi River and Chicago. On the radio, other tows tell us how they are doing in the Pekin wiggles. During the forward watch, on this tow, the captain mentioned them when they were still three hours upstream. They would not be his to negotiate. Two in the afternoon and the pilot, Mel Adams, of the back watch, the after watch, is addressing them at the moment. He has made a sharp turn to the left followed by a bend to the right, and is now going into an even sharper turn to the left that will line him up with the Pekin railroad bridge, of the Union Pacific. There is not much horizontal clearance under the Pekin bridge.

Mel is tall and lanky, fed in the middle but lithe in the legs. He has a sincere mustache, a trig goatee, and a slow, clear, frank, and friendly Ozark voice. He lives in southern Missouri, on Table Rock Lake, which has seven hundred miles of shoreline. The eight other people in the crew of this vessel all call him "Male." They are from Kentucky, Tennessee, Oklahoma, southern Missouri, and southernmost Illinois. They work twenty-eight days per stint. When they report for work, they show up in Paducah and are driven in a van from Kentucky up into Illinois or anywhere else this towboat happens to be. Its name is Billy Joe Boling.

Over all, the Illinois is a fairly straight river, only ten per cent longer than its beeline, the fact notwithstanding that the bends at Pekin corkscrew like fishing line that has come untied. Mel understands monofilament. He is wearing shorts, sandals, a cap with the word "FISHING" sewed into it, and a T-shirt covered with fish. Each morning, before he goes off watch at five-thirty, he cell-phones his wife, Aurora, and gently awakens her. When he is at home, he routinely gets up at four-thirty, goes fishing, is off the lake by nine, and by nine-thirty has cleaned his fish and put them in the freezer. He says his personal best is a twenty-eight-pound flathead catfish. In his Bayliner Trophy 1703 with center console, he penetrates the bays and skims the shoals of that seven-hundred-mile shoreline, his touch grooved with experience.

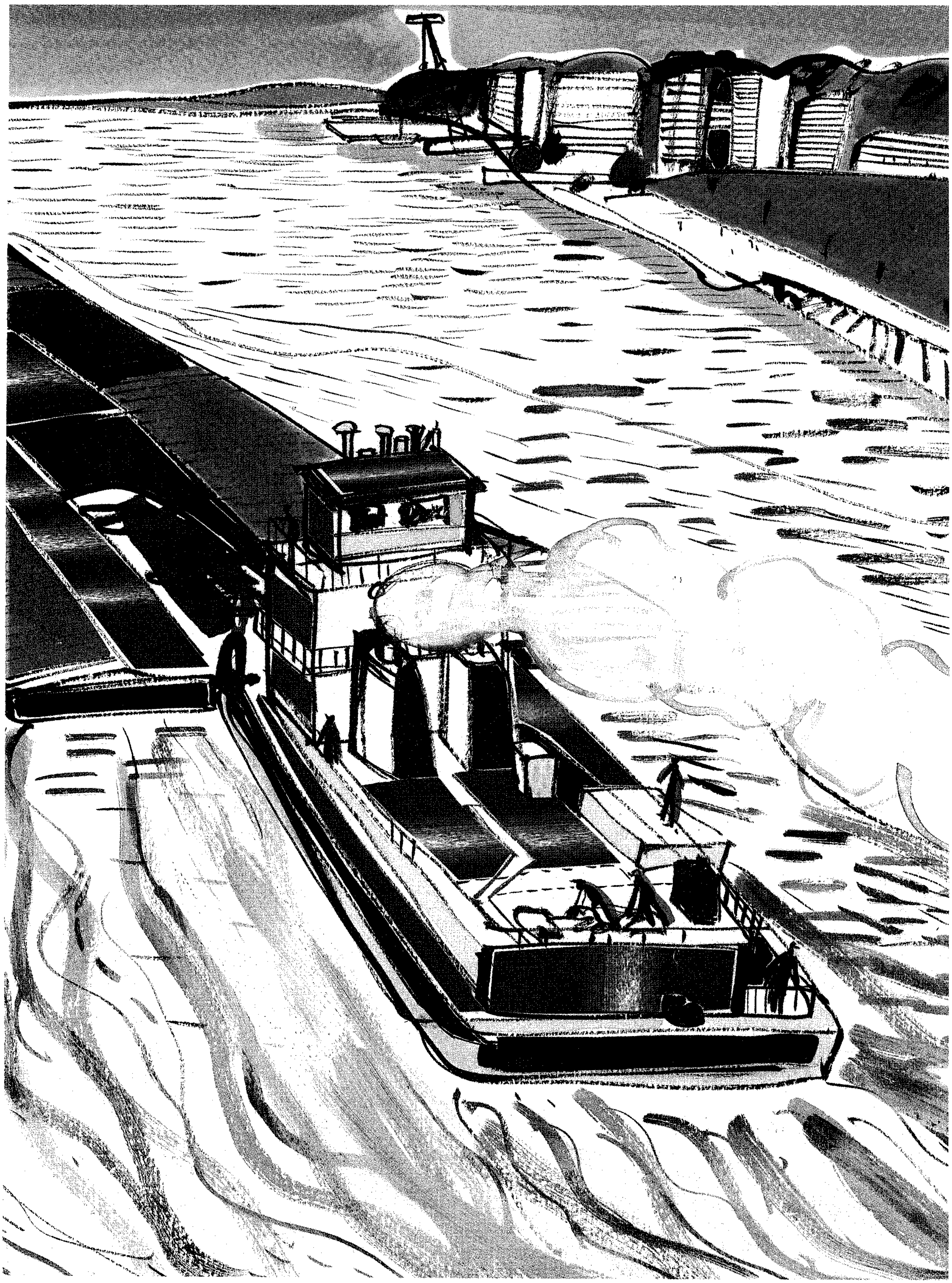
A lot of good that will do him here. This vessel is no Bayliner with center console, and the Illinois River is not a big lake in the Ozarks. The mate Carl Dalton has gone up ahead with his walkie-talkie to serve as a pair of eyes for Mel in the pilothouse, near the stern. Carl is a tall guy who played Kentucky high-school basketball, but when he was halfway up the tow, near the break coupling, he was already a tiny figure, and now, all the way up at the head, he is an ant. This vessel is a good deal longer than the Titanic. It is thirteen feet longer than Cunard's Queen Mary 2, the longest ocean liner ever built. It is forty-four feet longer than any existing aircraft carrier. It is a hundred and five feet wide. And with Carl calling off numbers—"twelve wide on the port . . . two hundred below . . . twelve wide, a hundred and fifty below . . . eight wide on the port, a hundred and twenty-five below . . . seven wide on the port . . . six wide on the port"—Mel is driving it into the crossing currents of the hundred-and-fifty-foot gap between one pier and the other of the bridge's channel span. It helps that the railroad tracks have been raised. In their normal position, they are three feet lower than the Billy Joe Boling.

The Illinois River is in most places a little more accommodating. With exceptions here and there, the demarcated channel is three hundred feet wide. But you are not going to do a doughnut with this vessel. You are not going to do a Williamson turn. Both maneu-



Among American rivers, only the Mississip

FILIPE JARDIM



nd the Ohio float more ton-miles of freight than the Illinois, a fact that does not seem to have done much to raise its national profile.

vers describe closed three-hundred-and-sixty-degree circuits. This vessel is nearly four times longer than the channel is wide. The entire river in most places is about a thousand feet from bank to bank. Our bow wave quickly spreads to both shores. We could not turn about if we had all of the river to do it in. If we were ninety degrees to the direction of the channel, we would block the river solid and spill over both sides into the trees.

Among American rivers, only the Mississippi and the Ohio float more ton-miles of freight than the Illinois, a fact that does not seem to have done much to raise its national profile. People say, "The Illinois River? What's that? Never heard of it. Where does it go?" Actually, there are three Illinois Rivers in America, each, evidently, as well known as the others. One is in southwestern Oregon. One rises in western Arkansas, describes a vast curve through eastern Oklahoma, and goes back into Arkansas as a tributary of the Arkansas River. The autochthonous Illinois River begins not far from Chicago, at the confluence of the Des Plaines and the Kankakee. From river town to river town, it draws a bar sinister across the state of Illinois—Marseilles, Ottawa, Starved Rock, Hennepin, Lacon, Rome, Peoria, Pekin, Havana, Bath, Browning, Beardstown, Meredosia, Florence, Hardin—descending two hundred and seventy-three river miles to Grafton, Illinois, on the Mississippi River forty miles up from St. Louis.

In the thousand feet in front of Mel are fifteen barges wired together in three five-barge strings. Variously, the barges contain pig iron, structural iron, steel coils, furnace coke, and fertilizer. Each barge is two hundred feet long. Those with the pig iron seem empty, because the minimum river channel is nine feet deep and the iron is so heavy it can use no more than ten per cent of the volume of a barge. The barges are lashed in seventy-six places in various configurations with hundreds of feet of steel cable an inch thick—scissor wires, jockey wires, fore-and-afts, double-ups, three-part backing breasts, three-part towing breasts. The Billy Joe Boling, at the stern, is no less tightly wired to the barges than the barges are to one another, so that the vessel is an essentially rigid unit with the plan view of a rat-tail file. In the upside-down and inside-out terminology of this trade, the Billy Joe Boling is a towboat. Its bow is blunt and as wide as its beam. It looks like a ship cut in half. Snug up against the rear barge in the center string, it is also wired tight to the rear barges in the port and starboard strings. It pushes the entire enterprise, reaching forward a fifth of a mile, its wake of white water thundering astern.

Carl Dalton, on the head of the tow, now says, "Six wide on the port, fifty below."

Mel, in the pilothouse, is grinning. He has come up to this railroad bridge many times before and evidently it amuses him. "This place is so narrow you have to put guys out on the head to tell you where you are," he says, and laughs.

Where is he? Fifty feet from the bridge, and his head corner on the port side is lined up so that it should miss the nearest pier by six feet. He is steering the Queen Mary up an undersized river and he is luxuriating in six feet of clearance. Meanwhile—back here a fifth of a mile—the dry riverbank is ten feet behind the stern rail. The stern is so close to the bank you could almost jump off without getting your feet wet. Mel is not standing at a wheel. On this vessel, a wheel is a propeller. There is no wheel in the pilothouse. He is handling instead a pair of horizontal sticks—beautiful brass fittings with pearl handles, one for the steering rudder, one for the flanking rudder. He also has two throttles, one for each engine. Each throttle has a forward and a reverse position. If he goes forward on one and back on the other, he can walk the whole tow sideways.

Years ago, our captain—who is off duty and in his room sleeping—was a deckhand on a tow that hit this bridge and scattered all fifteen barges.

"Five wide," Carl says. Carl is five feet from the pier and has drawn even with it.

"That's perfect," Mel tells him. "That's all. I got 'er."

"Getting set" is vernacular for being moved sideways by current. When Mel is steering through less complicated reaches of the river, he will choose an object under a mile in front of him (an island, say) and another object (say, a church steeple) directly behind the first one and much farther away. If the steeple moves to the left with respect to the island, the tow is being set to the left. If the steeple moves off to the right of the island, the tow is being set to the right. He doesn't need any church steeples here. There is nothing subtle about the current under this bridge. We are about a third of the way through now and the current has begun to shove the head from the west side of the channel toward the east, skidding the whole big vessel from one pier toward the other. We started sixty inches off the west pier and—after moving forward eleven hundred and forty-five feet—we end up sixty inches off the east pier as the stern slides by it.

Mel aims the tow into a mile and a half of dead-straight river. Skyscraping grain elevators line the eastern bank. Beyond them, and behind a high levee, are the invisible streets of Pekin. "When we was going through the bridge, we had to favor the leg on the left side 'cause the current will push us over to the pier on the right side, so we had to favor the pier on the left side real close," he says. "You could feel the current catching the head, pushing it over towards the right. So we pushed it through about another two hundred feet, then let it run on straight rudder for a while. By the time we got through the bridge, we only had about five feet of clearance on the starboard side. That's how you take it through that bridge, especially when we got some current running, like we do now."

After lighting a cigarette, he adds, "There are seven different ways to run a river—high water, low water, upriver with the current on your head, downriver, daytime, nighttime, and running it by radar. Once you learn those seven ways, you can run any river. We made the Pekin wiggles in one try."

OPEN SLEEVE

In this sort of journey, there is no real departure or precise destination. Its structure is something like a sleeve open at both ends. Several days go by, a couple of hundred miles, and then a machine in the pilothouse suddenly springs to life as if it were the tenth member of the crew. Staccato and syllabic, its voice blurts out, "You . . . have . . . ree . . . ceived . . .

new . . . orr . . . derrs. . . . Please . . . ree . . . view . . . them . . . as . . . soon . . . as . . . poss . . . ibb . . . bull." A printout comes forth like a tongue. Upriver in a day or so, we will be turned by the Ashley Lay. On the Mississippi River, a tow might consist of forty-nine barges in seven strings—a vessel more than fifteen hundred feet long and nearly two hundred and fifty feet wide. The diesels pushing it will develop as much as ten thousand five hundred horsepower. To enter the Illinois River and not plug it up forever, the numbers have to go down to fifteen barges and, say, thirty-six hundred horsepower, like the Billy Joe Boling. Nearing Chicago, the waterway becomes tighter and flatter (less current) and you don't need the Billy Joe Boling anymore. You want the Ashley Lay, twenty-eight hundred. Even closer to Chicago, where concrete walls close in on the waterway and bridges don't draw, "jackoff" boats take over. For dipping under bridges, their pilothouses go up and down hydraulically. They move six or eight barges at a time. On a boat with the power of the Billy Joe Boling, you go up the river until another crew turns you. You pick up their barges and go back down to the Mississippi, where, say, you turn the Edwin A. Lewis and the Edwin A. Lewis turns you. Then you go back up the Illinois.

Ours are Memco Barge Line barges. Memco moves upward of two thousand barges on Middle American rivers and is third in a very large field. When I called Memco not long after sending the company a formal request for a ride, Don Huffman, in St. Louis, said, "What day would you like to go?" It was as if I were talking to Southwest Airlines. Tows are moving about the country all the time. When and where would I like to get on one? I flew to St. Louis, and went up to Grafton, where the Billy Joe Boling came along after a while and picked me off the riverbank with a powered skiff. Some five hundred miles later, the skiff would put me ashore in the same place. In an equal number of days last year (and by daylight only), I rode six times as far in a tractor-trailer. Faster, certainly, but barge companies are committed to pointing out that a fifteen-barge tow like this one can carry what eight hundred and seventy tractor-trailers would be carrying on highways. This comparison is not without precedent. In 1805, barges on the Middlesex Canal, in Massachusetts, transported more than nine thousand tons of freight, and it was said that if the same freight had travelled on dry land fifty-six thousand oxen would have been needed to move it.

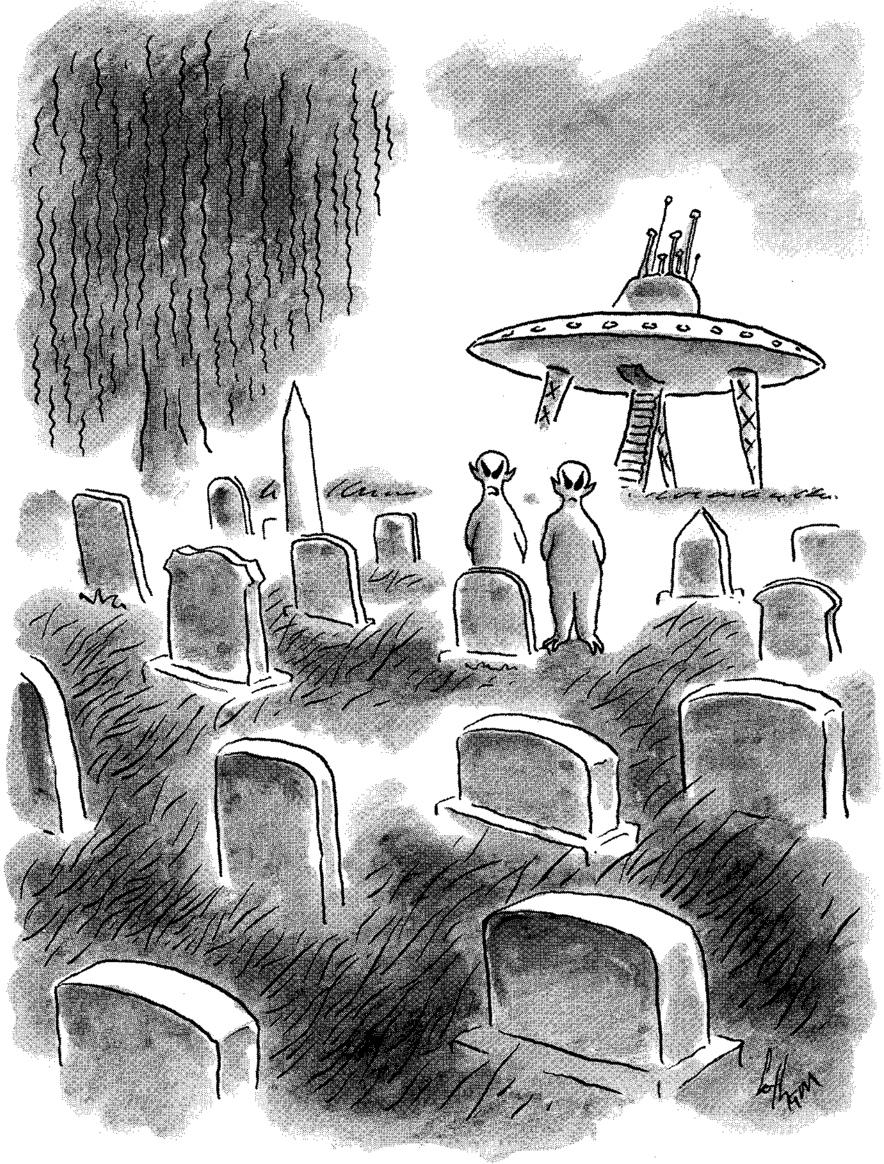
Six A.M. of the forward watch and Tom Armstrong—the captain himself—is at the sticks. The voice in the machine has been sounding off, and I am wondering about the changing of orders and the turning of tows. "How long do you usually know what's going to happen?" I ask him.

"Usually there's no usually in towboats," he answers.

He lights a Marlboro. He is thirty-nine—the fifth oldest in the crew of nine. His jeans are patched in the seat and he wears an aquamarine T-shirt lettered "Gecko Hawaii Pro Surf Team." Of medium height and strongly built, he has a precise, navigational mustache. He is left-handed, his hair is brush cut, his vision is 20/13. His eyes, remarkably bright, seem to project forward as horizontal periscopes. He has a constant, knowledgeable smile. "Towboating—it grows on you like a wart," he says. "See what I'm sayin'?"

Fond of that question, he repeats it many dozens of times per day. Phonetically, it emerges as "See what I'm sane?"

The sun appears above the trees, and Tom says, "Every day is a holiday, every meal a banquet. Got it made. Just don't know it." Another mantra. Another Marlboro. Sixteen years ago, he was a



"They're very time-sensitive."

green deckhand on the lower Mississippi. He has held the rank of captain eleven years, working all rivers, mainly this one. His competence seems as absolute as his youthfulness seems indelible. Holding the sticks, he sits on his seat with his legs curled up under him, like anybody's grandson.

Captains all "come up through the deck," as the expression goes—the towboaters' equivalent of the merchant mariners' "coming up the hawsepipe." After working as a deckhand for two years, you can get a steering license. After you steer under a captain for eighteen months, you are eligible for a pilot license. You pass the physical, the radar training, and the simulator class in Paducah. A new, framed certificate appears on a bulkhead in a pilothouse somewhere: "William Thomas Armstrong . . . is licensed to serve as operator of uninspected towing vessels upon western rivers."

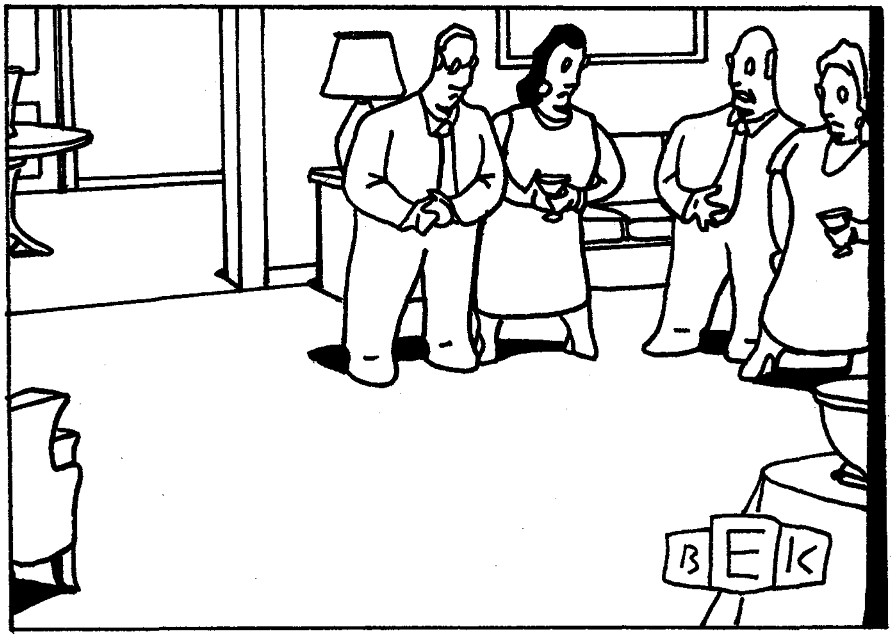
Tom is not hesitant to call the work stressful: "It takes good nerves to come down on a bridge sideways—I'm not sure I want to be out here driving a boat at sixty-five." He tells a story about a doctor who rode a towboat on the lower Mississippi to do stress tests on the captain. In the middle of the testing, the doctor was so stressed he asked to be taken off the boat. "One captain dropped out of medical school because his father died, and he came out here and was still here thirty years later," Tom goes on, in free association. I ask him how many skippers are women. "Two women worked their way up to the pilothouse," he says. "One of them is still out here, the other hit a bridge."

We are surrounded by glass in the pilothouse, large windows on all four sides. Our eyes are thirty-six feet above the water. The pilothouse smells like a bar under the old Third Avenue El. It is not a beer smell. Alcohol is forbidden and there is no evidence of it in sniff or behavior on the Billy Joe Boling. The pilothouse, which is swept and scrubbed clean every day, so reeks of tobacco smoke that the smell seems painted on the air. This is because Tom is a chain-smoker and Mel just smokes a lot. Between them, they are in the pilothouse twenty-four hours a day. Others in the crew are also present here for varying lengths of time. Seven of the nine are smokers. Gene Diebold, the chief engineer, comes up to the pilothouse in the evenings to sit and look at the river. The chief, as everyone calls him, is a round and pleasant man, about sixty, a onetime automobile mechanic who has developed hearing loss in his eight years on the rivers. A Missourian, he grew up in Benton, south of Cape Girardeau. He says he has "no high-pitched hearing left; if several people are talking, I can't understand a thing." Yet he generally ignores the large-cup ear protectors that hang on pegs outside his engine room, preferring inserted plugs. You see him in there with a blue-and-white towel wrapped around his head as if he were out here to hide from Homeland Security. The chief, as it happens, is allergic to tobacco smoke. But that does not alter his affection for the pilothouse and his evening contemplation of the river. By 9 P.M., Tom is past the second pack of his day. Tom says, "It's hard to find people who don't smoke these days. They tried to set up a boat that would be a non-smoking boat, but they couldn't find the crew members, see what I'm sane? Cigarettes aren't bad for your health, just ask the tobacco companies."

Mel and Tom, in the course of their watches, both dip snuff. They dip mint-flavored Skoal. They dip wintergreen long-cut Timber Wolf. Tom offers me some, and supplies instructions. I haven't smoked a cigarette in forty years, let alone dipped wintergreen Timber Wolf. I put it inside my lip and soon feel as if I've had a five-shot latte. Tom confides, "I dip snuff to try to cut down on cigarettes."

Six hours a watch is a long time for him and Mel to be up here, their hands on or close to the sticks. They can't leave and go below when they need to urinate. So a toilet is a part of the furniture in the pilothouse—open, unscreened. It's just there, in one corner, like the radar. At first I felt I shouldn't use it. For the skipper to pee in my presence somehow seemed politically correct, but not vice versa. I got over that in the first thirty-six hours, and have been peeing up here in the pilothouse as if the toilet were a bush on a fishing trip.

"There are two places in the world—home and everywhere else, and everywhere else is the same," Tom says, looking out at the levees, the miles of river, the willows, the cottonwoods, the silver maples, the roofs of small, concealed communities. Tom is from Cadiz, in western Kentucky. "Kay-diz," he says, his accent on the "Kay." "It's a two-stoplight town" less than twenty miles from Tennessee, on Lake Barkley of the Cumberland River. He went into the Army without finishing Trigg County High School (Class of 1983), and out of the Army into towboats, on which he now makes sixty-some thousand dol-



"I carry all my stress in Margaret's back."

lars for working half the year. "I make pretty good money," he says. "Out here is a pretty good job. The money and the time off attract all of us. If we're not out here, we're not going to be no professor in a college, we're going to be in a factory five, six days a week. A factory worker, if his job is to put this screw in that gun, that's what he does all day every day for twenty years. Imagine how old that would get." Entrepreneurial, conscious of world money markets, schooled in the biographies of historic capitalists, Tom owns and rents out "a couple of dozen units" (rooms, houses, agricultural acreage), and additionally owns a hundred-acre farm with twenty beef cattle on it. While he is away on the Billy Joe Boling, his wife, Debbie, manages the property. Also a library clerk, Debbie is Tom's third wife. Separately and together, they have had no children. When Tom is at home, and is not making rounds on his motorcycle from one unit to the next, he is probably out on the Cumberland River piloting his ski boat.

"No more 'Hardball'—I'll talk!"

• •

HENNEPIN

We are two hundred miles up the river and approaching Hennepin, ninety minutes—seven more miles—upstream. This tow has about as much contact with the towns it passes as a tractor-trailer does on I-55. To the Hennepin Boat Market we have faxed ahead for food. We don't stop for much but navigation locks. Almost everything is brought to us by service boats as we drive on. However, we need to dock at Hennepin today to take on water.

The deckhands of the forward watch are straining at their cheater bars, revolving the ratchets that tighten the cruciate, interbarge wires, which are strung horizontally among timberheads and cavels, and in most places are only a couple of inches above the decks and gunwales of the barges. The deckhands are tuning the tow like a piano, and the work is beyond heavy. Closing pelican hooks, putting keepers in place, cranking ratchets, they make the wires so taut that if they stand on them the wires don't touch the deck. As we look down on the deckhands from the pilothouse, Tom takes a drag on a Marlboro, emits a gray cloud, and says to me, "If you didn't go to school and get a good education, you'd be out there working your ass off tightening them wires."

Rick Walker and Jason Beuke are the deckhands of the forward watch. Jason, of Paducah, is a two-tripper, this being his second trip ever on a tow. A wrestler when he was in high school, he weighs three hundred pounds. He carries it easily. Rick lives near Golconda, Illinois, close to the Ohio River. If you did not know him, you might say he has a demeanor that is vaguely sinister. If you do know him, you would probably say that he likes to give that impression. Thirty-four years old, fatless and wiry with dark bright eyes, he may not yet have met his first barber. An almost unceasing worker twelve hours each day, he is the Billy Joe Boling's second mate. Tom Armstrong refers to him as "the black-haired dude."

Rick is paired with Tom and Jason manning this immense vessel from five-thirty to eleven-thirty in the morning and five-thirty to eleven-thirty in the evening, the punctually observed hours of the six-to-twelve watch. If Rick is not out checking barges, tightening wires, or straightening up the captain's room, he is generally up here in the pilothouse polishing the windows inside and out, shining the metal surfaces, thickening the smoke. He takes note of my routines with unconcealed contempt, in part because I don't have any. I get up about when he does, a little before 5 A.M., awakened by knocks on my door by a deckhand on the twelve-to-six watch. After a fast breakfast in the galley, I climb to the pilothouse, arriving usually as Mel turns the sticks over to Tom. Since there is nowhere to go—no long, Emersonian walks among the fifteen barges—I sit or stand in the pilothouse sixteen hours a day, staring at the river with an open notebook. Rick Walker makes clear that he looks upon this as idling in the *n*th dimension. One morning, he said, "Why don't you pick up a broom and do something useful?" At the end of my sixteen hours, when I stir to go below, he will say with incredulity, "Don't tell me you're going off to bed," accenting the "bed" as if it were a synonym for cowardice. Rick and Tom are not out of synch. When I mentioned that I have a fishing shack up a river somewhere, Tom said, "It's probably ten thousand square feet."

Meals are the bright punctuation of the day out here, never mind that dinner is at eleven in the morning, supper at five in the afternoon, and breakfast in the creeping dawn. The after watch eats at those hours and goes to work. The forward watch eats some minutes later and goes to bed—everybody sleeping and everybody working twice a day. Everybody but Bryan Velazquez, who is called upon when needed—mainly in navigation locks—and has to be available twenty-four hours a day. After a dinner of round steak, brown gravy, okra, hominy, green beans, and mashed potatoes, Tom remarked, "They feed us slaves like kings. Fish Friday, steak Saturday, chicken Sunday—towboat tradition." A sled dog would understand how long it takes us to finish. The galley is behind the engine room at the rear of the main deck and to get there you walk a narrow route along guard chains beside the river. You fill your plate and sit at a counter, all diners facing in the same direction. When I first sat down there, the cook, Donna Hobbs, told me to take my hat off when I eat.

Donna is highly regarded for smoking only behind the counter and not over the stove. Eighteen years on various rivers, she is from Paducah now, but she went to Jefferson High School in Rockford, Illinois. She wears flip-flops or thick-soled white running shoes, sweatpants, T-shirts, an embroidered square-neck short-sleeved cream blouse. Her hair is blond and she keeps it in a ponytail. If she is making cinnamon buns, her day begins at two-forty-five in the morning. No cinnamon buns, she gets up at three. On Sunday mornings at breakfast time, she is not in the galley. On Sunday mornings, she is allowed "to sleep in," and she gets up at 7 A.M. to prepare dinner. "I sleep in shifts," she remarked one evening at six when I lingered in the galley to talk to her. Finished for the day, she said she was going to take a shower and watch "The African Queen." The story is appealing on a towboat and she has watched the movie innumerable times. We talked about Bogart and the leeches, Bogart at the end in the reeds. She said it was amazing how fast he fixed that prop when he dinged it in the rapids. Donna is a quarter Cherokee. "You can see it in my high cheekbones," she said, turning sideways in her Kentucky Wildcats T-shirt, a gold cross hanging from her neck. She has a tattoo on her right arm—a dream catcher on a bear's claw around a bear's head. It filters out bad dreams. She was divorced in 1987, after which she lived with a man nine years. She told him to do what he wanted when she was on the boat but not to run around when she was at home. He didn't.

A BRIEF FOR THE DEFENSE

Sorrow everywhere. Slaughter everywhere. If babies
are not starving someplace, they are starving
somewhere else. With flies in their nostrils.
But we enjoy our lives because that's what God wants.
Otherwise the mornings before summer dawn would not
be made so fine. The Bengal tiger would not
be fashioned so miraculously well. The poor women
at the fountain are laughing together between
the suffering they have known and the awfulness
in their future, smiling and laughing while somebody
in the village is very sick. There is laughter
every day in the terrible streets of Calcutta,
and the women laugh in the cages of Bombay.
If we deny our happiness, resist our satisfaction,
we lessen the importance of their deprivation.
We must risk delight. We can do without pleasure,
but not delight. Not enjoyment. We must have
the stubbornness to accept our gladness in the ruthless
furnace of this world. To make injustice the only
measure of our attention is to praise the Devil.
If the locomotive of the Lord runs us down,
we should give thanks that the end had magnitude.
We must admit there will be music despite everything.
We stand at the prow again of a small ship
anchored late at night in the tiny port
looking over to the sleeping island: the waterfront
is three shuttered cafés and one naked light burning.
To hear the faint sound of oars in the silence as a rowboat
comes slowly out and then goes back is truly worth
all the years of sorrow that are to come.

—*Jack Gilbert*

Two buzzards circle the tow. Tom, steering, looking up at them, says, "They know who the cook is on this boat. They're waiting for one of us to die." This is outrageously unfair to Donna, and he knows it. "Some cooks are young," Tom goes on. "The company, they prefer the Fifty-five Club—fifty-five years old and fifty-five pounds overweight, see what I'm sane?" He mentions a regular cook on the rivers who is in her upper seventies. He also mentions Granny, whose real name is Mary. "There are fewer young ones than men cooks," he continues. "They call them in for an interview, see that they're young and beautiful, and she isn't hired. The company, it isn't their first rodeo, see what I'm sane? If she's young and beautiful, she has to be smarter than the average bear to survive. Good-looking woman, the men are like buzzards on a fence. If there's a young cook, the buzzards are sane, 'These are the best hot dogs I've ever eaten.' An old woman, she could serve them a six-course meal and they'd bitch."

Along the riverbank just below Hennepin, we pass two dozen covered barges, loaded with grain at the Hennepin elevator and now moored in fleets waiting to be picked up. Some are tied to trees, some to massive chunks of concrete set in the bank. Old propane tanks serve as mooring floats. Wires from the moorings are tied to three bunched auto tires whose collective elasticity is neither too great nor too modest to control the wayward lurchings of two thousand tons of loaded barge. Chains large enough to anchor oceangoing ships in turn connect the tires to the concrete chunks in the bank or are looped around cottonwoods and maples. We tie up the tow, detach the Billy Joe, and run in to the Hennepin dock. Backed into a berth beside the dock is the Robert J., a condensed general store that is a small boat in itself, and ordinarily would come out on the river and attach itself to the running tow. Spectacularly varied, crowded with goods, it is stocked with everything a towboater might need or find attractive—a video, for example, called "Oral Orgasms" and subtitled "Carpet Munching Extravaganza." Close by "Oral Orgasms" are *Scientific American* and a 20-gauge shotgun up for raffle. Mark Judd, big and friendly, runs the Robert J. When towboaters telephone or fax ahead for something he doesn't have, he will go and get it—sometimes driving considerable distances—and he charges nothing for the service. He collects their prescriptions, goes off and fills them. If your tooth is aching, he will take you to the dentist. Heart? Liver? Duodenum? He will take you to a doctor. He went to a Wal-Mart once to buy Mel Adams a pair of glasses. He gives the towing companies a long rope. A towing company once owed him three hundred thousand dollars. Donna Hobbs, shopping in Mark's store, runs an eye over the porn shelves but does not bat it.

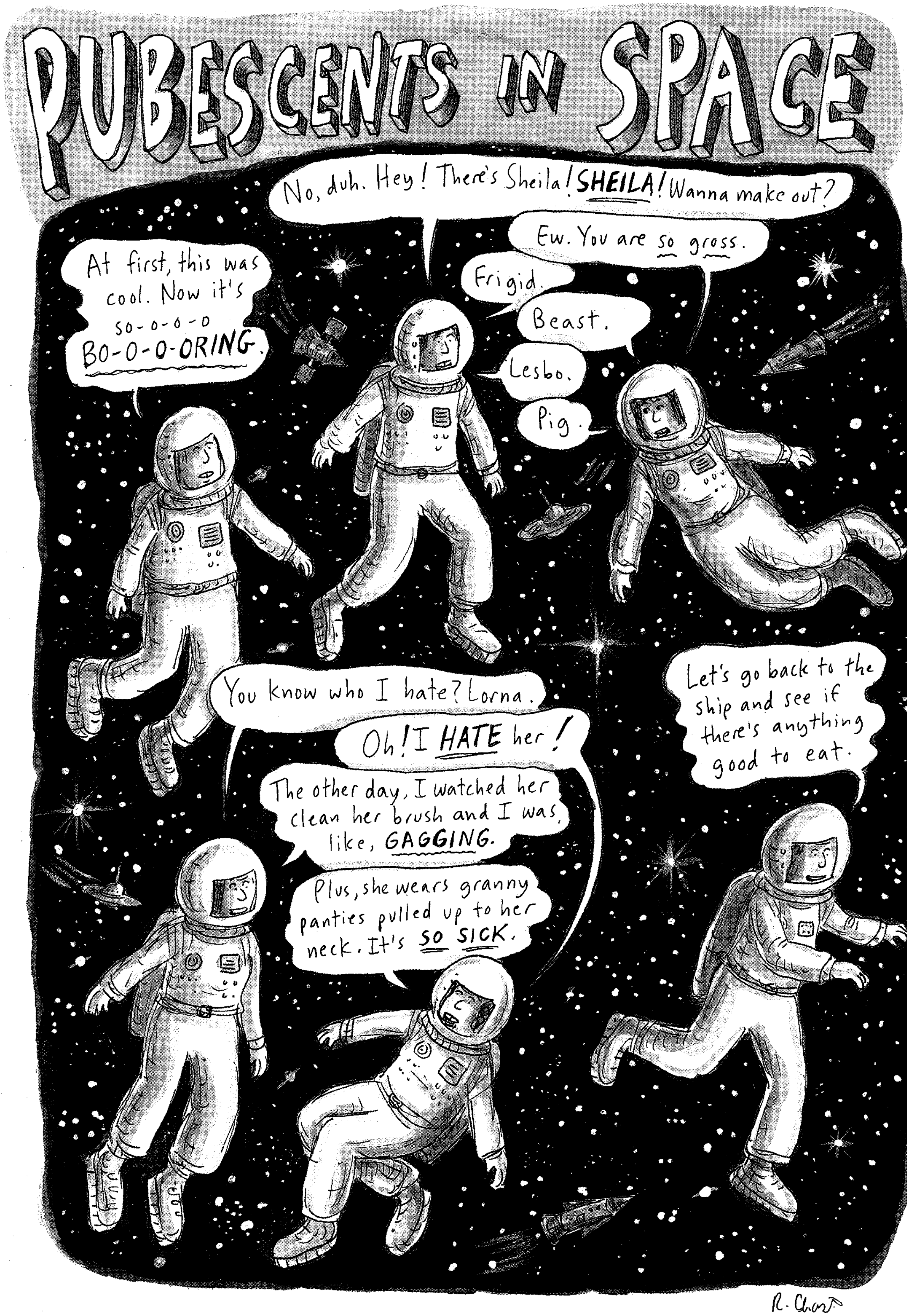
The Hennepin Boat Market, up the levee and into the town, is also owned by Mark Judd. It is the only bulk grocer serving the river's vessels in three hundred miles. The check-off shopping lists we get from them by fax say that Hennepin Boat Market "provides a 25-hour, 8 days a week, 53 weeks a year midstream grocery delivery." With Tom's permission, while he is taking on water and supplies, I walk a loop through the streets of Hennepin—a spread-out town of open spaces, with contiguous lawns, few sidewalks, and almost no fences, as if the houses were married quarters on a naval base somewhere, the dead silence of nine in the morning broken only by birds in the oaks and maples. Seven hundred people live in Hennepin, which is named for a priest who accompanied the Sieur de La Salle portaging out of Lake Michigan and into the Illinois River system in 1679. Father Hennepin, chronicler of the expedition, is described in James Gray's "The Illinois" (Farrar & Rinehart, 1940) as "a vain, pretentious priest who claimed the achievements of his betters" and "made love to himself on paper." I am late returning to the Billy Joe Boling, which has taken on its water, stowed its provisions, and for fifteen minutes has been ready to go. Tom, in the pilothouse, 9:30 A.M., supposes aloud that I have been to a bar. Add that to my ten-thousand-square-foot fishing shack, and I have suddenly become a rich alcoholic. Tom has had his wife, in Kentucky, check me out on the Internet. Now he says on the phone to her, "He's got a couple of daughters. Check them out, too. See if they robbed a bank or a liquor store."

CALLING TRAFFIC

When I told my friend Andy Chase that I was coming out here, he said, "The way they handle those boats—gad! They go outrageous places with them. The ship handling is phenomenal." Andy is a licensed master of ships of any gross tons upon oceans, and he is also a professor at Maine Maritime Academy. His credentials notwithstanding, he said he would envy me being here. This tow is not altogether like an oceangoing ship. We are a lot longer than the Titanic, yes, but we are a good deal lighter. We weigh only thirty thousand tons. Yet that is surely enough to make our slow motion massive, momentous, tectonic. Fighting the current with full left rudder and full left flanking rudder in the eighty-degree turn at Creve Coeur Landing, Kickapoo Bend, Tom Armstrong says, "I'm trying to get it pointed up before it puts me on the bank. There's no room for maneuvering. You can't win for losing. You just don't turn that fast. You just don't stop that fast. Sometimes we don't make our turns. We have to back up. The Illinois River's such a tight-assed river."

We are anything but alone. In addition to pleasure craft, other long tows are before us and behind us on the river, like a string of airliners on final in a long line to Newark—the Austin Golding, the Frank Stegbauer, the Martha Mac, the Tamera Pickett, the Starfire. With this difference: another succession of thousand-foot tows is always coming toward us in the opposite direction, sharing the same channel in the same small

"And you're sure they're gang colors?"


PUBESCENTS IN SPACE
At first, this was cool. Now it's so-o-o-o BO-O-O-ORING.
No, duh. Hey! There's Sheila! SHEILA! Wanna make out?
Ew. You are so gross.
Frigid.
Beast.
Lesbo.
Pig.
You know who I hate? Lorna.
Oh! I HATE her!
The other day, I watched her clean her brush and I was, like, GAGGING.
Plus, she wears granny panties pulled up to her neck. It's SO SICK.
Let's go back to the ship and see if there's anything good to eat.

R. Chast

river. Tows moving downcurrent have the right of way. If you are headed upstream, you have to pull into a hold-up spot and wait for them to go by. Hold-up spots, in some parts of the river, are far between. Both Tom and Mel have their own copies of the "Illinois Waterway Navigation Charts," a publication of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. They have identified hold-up spots that will work under present conditions, and have marked them in pencil—places ample enough for putting the nose into the bank without blocking the river. When you are waiting for another vessel to pass, you literally stick your head into the mud at the edge of the river and hold there obliquely (/). Places are rare that are wide enough for two to pass while both are moving.

Trains run under centralized systems. These people are self-organized, talking back and forth on VHF, planning hold-ups and advances, and signing off with the names of their vessels: "Billy Joe Boling southbound, heading into Anderson Lake country. Billy Joe Boling, southbound."

This is known as "calling traffic."

"Billy Joe Boling heading down toward the Marquette Bar. Billy Joe Boling heading toward the Marquette Bar. Billy Joe Boling."

A deep-voiced acknowledgment comes into the pilothouse: "Billy Joe, Jon J. Strong." The captain of the Jon J. Strong has got the message.

"Billy Joe Boling heading southbound into Abe Lincoln. Billy Joe Boling."

For anyone within VHF range, this means that the Billy Joe Boling is soon to pass under Interstate 39's Abraham Lincoln Memorial Bridge. It means "I'm coming down, get out of my way." At Abe Lincoln, the river bends ninety degrees and soon goes under a second bridge.

Tom calls to another captain, "You'd better give them a shout down there before you get committed." In other words, before you proceed you need to know that the river is open to—and including—your next manageable hold-up spot. St. Louis to Chicago, Chicago to St. Louis, this is like jumping from lily pad to lily pad. It is also reminiscent of the way that airplane pilots in flight constantly study their charts, picking out airports where, if need be, they can make an emergency landing. "We don't try to plug up a hole and then try to get in the hole," Tom Armstrong says. "It don't make for a good day. We have to move from hold-up spot to hold-up spot and not think we're going to get in one when someone else is in it. On-the-job training is the only way to learn this."

On the job calling traffic—and in the interest of making time at the expense of others—some captains learn to deceive. As Mel Adams puts it, "They sometimes lie. They lie in both directions."

No one is going to be lying when two moving tows, in adequate water, are passing. The captains say to each other, "See you on the 1," or "See you on the 2." Passing on the 1 always means that both boats would turn to starboard to avoid collision. Two boats, meeting and passing on the 1, will go by each other port to port. Therefore, passing on the 1 in opposite directions is different from passing on the 1 when overtaking. Passing on the 1 when overtaking is to go by the other boat's starboard side. The stand-on vessel, nearly always the vessel heading upstream, maintains everything as is. The action vessel maneuvers. If you are learning this on the job, you may by now be up a street in Peoria. If you are still on the water, you may be feeling the hydraulic effect of the other tow sucking you toward it. One of my notes says, "The Mark Shurden with three barges carrying black oil passes us and sucks our stern, swinging our head toward the red buoys." The riverbank is variously wicked and benign. It can pull you in or fend you off. Mel says, "There's a real fine line between bank cushion and bank suction. An extra five feet and it sucks you right over to it. You've got to stop and break the suction," while the Billy Joe shudders with cavitation.

Approaching a ferry, Mel on the VHF volunteers to drift while the ferry crosses the river. The ferryman says, "Keep her coming. I don't want to slow down the economy." The economy goes past the ferry doing four miles an hour. Tom says the tow moves more gracefully when it is going downstream: "It slides more, and is more dangerous, going down—at bridges, for example, with the current on your stern—but it's more graceful, and you have the right of way. Going upstream, it's easier to stop if you have to." Flanking is a downstream move. You slow your engines at a bend and let the current push the tow around. "Every bend is a challenge, though. You're pushing it to the max every day—pushing the drafts, toting the heaviest barges you can, going as fast as you can." Going deep is "steering as close to the outside of a bend as you can and still make the turn." It is what you would do in a canoe in a small stream, and this canoe is longer than the river is wide. "So shallow and so small, this river is more difficult to navigate than the Lower and the Ohio," Tom says. The Lower runs past Memphis, Vicksburg, and New Orleans.

They use the searchlight all night, a thousand watts, its beam a bright cylinder through the saturated air. It picks out green can buoys and red nun buoys—reds on the right going north. Not all the buoys are always in place. Picking his way in the dark across the seventeen broad miles of Peoria Lake, Tom describes what he is doing as "an Easter-egg hunt." The white beam is galactic with bugs—enough mayflies, it seems, to feed all the trout in the Rockies. Elsewhere on the river, missing buoys have been dragged away by tows. "This is like driving a car with your damned eyes closed," Tom says. "If you run aground, try to be going slow enough so you can back off." The Coast Guard buoy tender Sangamon passes us, pushing a small barge. On the deck, lined up like naval ordnance, are row upon row of new green and red buoys.

The swing indicator in the pilothouse measures the degrees to port or star-board that the tow is turning. Also close around the person at the sticks are the fax, the cell phone, the computer, the radar, the AM-FM radio, the tape player, the Qualcomm, two depth finders, two VHF marine radios (in order to monitor two channels), the G.P.S., the searchlight controls, and the general-alarm switch. There is no need for a compass, heaven knows, and—given the swing indicator—no need for a gyroscope. Knotted rubber cords hold back the books on the shelves under the fax. This vessel will wait a long time to ride its first swell, but when the Billy Joe Boling goes around a bend and its stern gets close to the bank and the wheel wash strikes the rudder, the vibration could sift a silo.

Coming up in the evening for his look around, the chief engineer says we are burning about twenty-four hundred gallons of diesel fuel a day. Not bad. We are getting nearly two hundred feet to the gallon. As a rule of thumb, a towboat burns one gallon per horsepower per day, but—at thirty-six hundred horsepower—that's not our thumb. The Billy Joe Boling has a tank capacity of sixty-two thousand gallons. We do not need anything like that amount of fuel but we fill her up anyway because we prefer not to "burn light." Tom says, "The lighter the boat gets, the sloppier it steers." It is best that the tanks not be less than half full. Putting that another way, diesel fuel is in use as ballast! As the barge industry is always ready to point out, in fuel consumed per ton-mile a tow is about two and a half times more efficient than a freight train, nearly nine times more efficient than a truck.

There are five dams on the Illinois River, none very high. Some are weirs, really, consisting largely of steel-and-timber wickets that can be lowered in high water so that tows can ride right over them, ignoring the navigation locks off to the side. In its two hundred and seventy-three miles, the river drops about ninety feet, indicating that the state of Illinois is almost as flat as it looks, its state-crossing river dropping down to the Mississippi six inches per mile.

At the higher dams, the navigation locks lift us or lower us about ten feet. "Locking through," the term that has described the process since the sixteenth century, is not, on this river, a simple matter of drain valves and filling valves. The locks consist of a "short wall," aligned with the current and standing in the river, and a "long wall" (or "guide wall") running along the bank. The short wall is rounded off at each end, a configuration known as the bull nose. The barges, three abreast, have five feet of clearance between the short wall and the long wall. The lock is six hundred feet long. Our vessel is nearly twice that. What to do?

Gingerly, you inch your thirty thousand tons up there past the bull nose. If you are heading downstream and you come in at too much of an angle, your head can become wedged between the short wall and the long wall while your stern is swung around by the current, with the result that your vessel becomes a lever prying at the navigation lock until masonry breaks, wires snap, loose barges are draped all over the dam, and your Billy Joe Boling, whatever it may be called, is hanging on the brink and listing.

You inch your tow up the long wall until nine barges are in the lock, and then you cut your vessel in half. You undo the wires at the break coupling. With the aft six barges, you back out. A door closes, sealing off the lock chamber. The drain valves are opened. The nine barges are lowered. Another door opens, and a mule—a wire on an electric winch—hauls the nine barges down the long wall to timberheads, where they are moored. The lock is refilled to receive the rear half of the tow. When it rejoins the front half, deckhands start leaning into their cheater bars at the limits of their strength, in all seasons and weathers, turning the ratchets that tighten the wires and restore the vessel to its complete integrity. You don't do this in ten minutes. We spend hours in the locks, and more hours near the locks waiting our turn. For smaller tows, there are rearrangements like the knockout single and the set-over single that pack all components into the lock at one time, but we are vastly too large for that. The term for what we do is "double lockage."

FIGHT
CRIME
GIVE
GENEROUSLY
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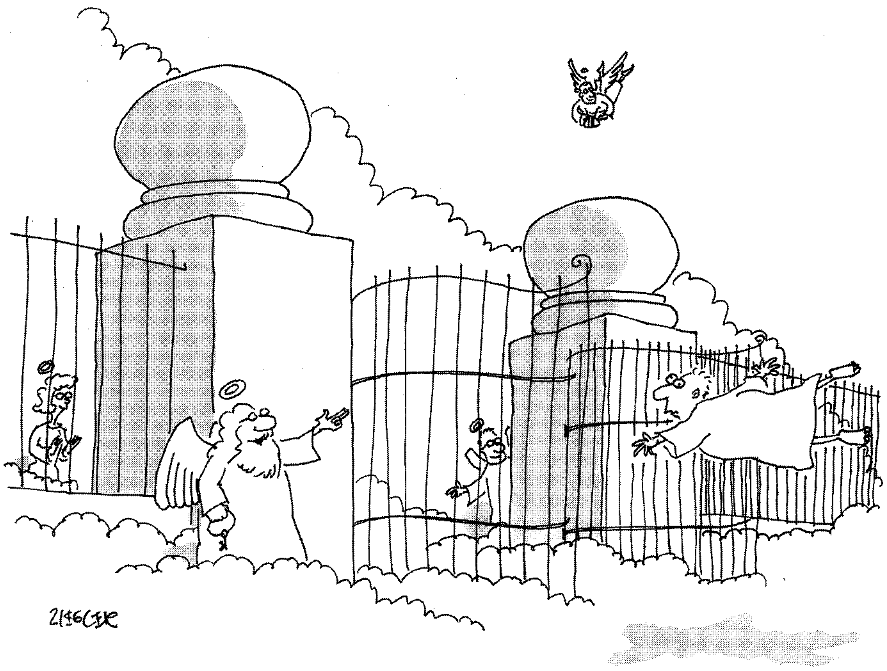
Of Peoria Lock, Mel Adams says, "This is a tough lock to get into southbound when it's running some water. You get your head in there and it wants to suck you over towards the dam, bad. If they're running more than three feet of water through the dam, get a tug. The tug puts the head end up against the wall, pins it on the wall, lets you get your head inside the bull nose, and you can get your stern in with your engines. If you don't have the tug, you can get wedged in, and the current takes the stern around and the barges break up and go into the wickets."

Below the lock at La Grange, and close to it, the rush of heavy water through the wide-open tainter gates of the adjacent dam is creating an eddy, which Mel—northbound here—calls a whirlpool. It turns clockwise, swinging around from the foot of the dam and running into the bull nose. Mel is inching up there, pushing his port head toward the long wall, his starboard head toward the bull nose. He could get over on the long wall, catch a line on the port lead barge, and rub this footprint aircraft carrier up the long wall, but that does not seem to be his default mode of ship handling. Maybe he can just go in there in one shot, and if he gets lucky he won't have to catch a line. The mate, Carl



"Here he is, folks, straight from his deathbed in Jersey City, a beautiful guy—let's hear a nice round of applause for . . ."

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Dalton, will not have to humiliate him by throwing an assistive rope around a timberhead.

Carl is on the port head as the tow moves upriver. Mel says to him on the walkie-talkie, "They're all out at the dam. It won't be lookin' purty when I get up there."

Carl calls off distances, long and short. Distance from the long wall. Distance from the lock gate. Distance from the bull nose. "Two hundred and fifty to the bull nose."

"I have to have the head on the wall to get it inside the bull nose," Mel mutters to himself. "You don't want to wedge in there. You could tear up barges, tear up the gates on the lock." But nobody needs to catch any lines as the huge vessel slides by the thundering rapids, absorbs the shock of the eddy, and aims for its five feet of clearance between the two walls.

"One hundred to the bull nose."

"Fifty to the bull nose."

"Even with the bull nose."

The tow, having smothered the whirlpool, now moves up between the walls and into the lock chamber.

When it stops there, Carl says, "The head never got more than a foot off the wall."

Mel says, "Sometimes you just get lucky."

Off Mayo Island, Ottawa, in pitch darkness, the Ashley Lay turns us and we turn the Ashley Lay. If we were in the Hudson River and had started at the mouth, we would be in the Adirondacks. The six strings of barges lie abreast, and the Billy Joe Boling keeps them in place, its light beam aimed at the bank and holding steady on the trunk of a tree. Mayflies—fewer here—go through the beam like comets. A heron goes through like a stork. In a curious ritual, the Ashley Lay picks up our head gear—running lights, flagpole, heavy nylon lock lines—and carries it to the head of our new tow. We hand over their groceries. They give us a wad of cash. We take their head gear with us to the upstream end of the strings, where we drop it off, then wire up to the new tow, facing downstream toward the Mississippi.

In the thousand feet of barges we now have before us are grains for export, corn for Baton Rouge, and coke for Kentucky. We brought twelve thousand tons of coke up the Illinois River and now we are pushing fourteen thousand tons of coke down the Illinois River. Tom Armstrong, coming on watch at 5:30 A.M., takes this in, and says, "One day, they'll figure it out and put us out of a job."

EMPTY POCKETS II

Mel Adams at the sticks in a long straight stretch of the river. A white cabin boat is in mid-channel directly in front of us, about three thousand feet away. It is not moving. We cannot see people aboard. For Mel, there is no possibility of maneuver, no possibility of stopping. Surely the cabin boat will move. Referring to our blunt head end, three barges wide, Mel says, "When they see a hundred and five feet of steel coming at them ten feet high, they'll get out of the way."

They do not. Mel, with binoculars, thinks he may have glimpsed a swimmer's head in the water, but that could have been a trick of the eye. As we bear down to two thousand and then fifteen hundred feet, the cabin boat stays where it is, dead in the water, less than two minutes from destruction. Mel gives it five short blasts, the universal statement of immediate danger. At just about the point where the cabin boat would go into our blind spot—the thousand feet of water that we in the pilothouse can't see—people appear on the cabin boat's deck, the boat starts up, and in a manner that seems both haughty and defiant moves slowly and slightly aside. We grind on downriver as the boat moves up to pass us port to port, making its way up the thousand feet of barges to draw even with the pilothouse. Two men and two women are in the cabin boat. The nearest woman—seated left rear in the open part of the cockpit—is wearing a black-and-gold two-piece bathing suit. She has the sort of body you go to see in marble. She has golden hair. Quickly, deftly, she reaches with both hands behind her back and unclasps her top. Setting it on her lap, she swivels ninety degrees to face the towboat square. Shoulders back, cheeks high, she holds her pose without retreat. In her ample presentation there is defiance of gravity. There is no angle of repose. She is a siren and these are her songs. She is Henry Moore's "Oval with Points." Moore said, "Rounded forms convey an idea of fruitfulness, maturity, probably because the earth, women's

"It turned out that everything he poured out to me that night on the bridge was spin."

breasts and most fruits are rounded, and these shapes are important because they have this background in our habits of perception. I think the humanist organic element will always be for me of fundamental importance in sculpture." She has not moved—this half-naked maja out-nakeding the whole one. Her nipples are a pair of eyes staring the towboat down. For my part, I want to leap off the tow, swim to her, and ask if there is anything I can do to help. We can now read the name on the transom behind her: Empty Pockets II.

This is happening between Brushy Lake and the Six Mile Slough, if you see what I'm sane. Pleasure craft are anywhere, everywhere up and down the river. We traverse a reach in Peoria through the Cedar Street Bridge and the Bob Michel Bridge and the Murray Baker Bridge among at least two dozen pleasure craft spread over the river and framed between the arches. Pontoon boats, jet boats, powerboats—they go into the locks behind us, ahead of us. At the 89 bridge, Mile 218, a marina is on one side, a boat launch on the other, and twelve pleasure craft are visible, eight coming toward us, and who knows how many we can't see. Pleasure craft are like the bugs in the searchlight beam. On Peoria Lake, some of them are under sail. Southbound, a three-deck cruiser called Bewitched comes down on the Marquette Bar. "See you on the 2 whistle," says Bewitched, as if he were a thousand feet long. Above the Marquette Bar, forty-some pleasure boats are beached along a sand strip like white walruses. A boat crosses in front of us dragging two small kids on a tube. When pleasure-craft numbers get really high, a deckhand is sent to the head of the tow as lookout.

The wheel wash of the Billy Joe Boling goes out astern like a No. 10 rapid in the Grand Canyon, which "cannot be run without risk of life." The class of the rapid counts down, of course, with distance from the stern, and jet boats and jet skiers, playing in the wake, flirt their way forward through the rising levels of risk. If some macho jet skier were to cut in close to the stern, he would fast become soggy toast. Pleasure craft constantly cross in front of us, too, and when that happens Tom Armstrong will say, "He has a lot of faith in his engine, doesn't he."

Slow as tows are, they sometimes hit pleasure craft, although it is usually the other way around. A skier or boat that comes in from the side to jump the wake can be sucked into and through the propellers. If a water-skier falls a thousand feet in front of the tow, the skier has sixty seconds to get out of the way or the skier can go under the entire tow and into the propellers. As a pleasure boat passed us one day dragging a small boy on a tube, Mel said, "If the line broke, that little boy would be sucked right into the wheel wash." While Mel was crossing Peoria Lake a few years ago, a boat with a water-skier disappeared under his head and reappeared without the water-skier. Then the boat turned around, disappeared again, and reappeared dragging the skier out of the way. A day or so ago, we came down on a fisherman in a flatboat with an outboard motor, fishing in the middle of the channel. Mel, with binoculars, saw him tugging and tugging at his starting rope. Another fishing boat threw him a line and saved him. "People dropping skiers right in front of us, people falling off their jet skis right in front of us—it's enough to make a nervous wreck out of me," Mel has said. "Pleasure boats sometimes raft together, drinking beer, paying no attention, drifting down the channel. Get too close to 'em, you put a suction on 'em and pull 'em right to you. I get so dang worried that I'm going to run one of them over, kill someone. I couldn't live with myself."

If the head end is running a notch or a spike, a pleasure boat coming up behind us with intent to go around us can be lethally surprised. A notch is one missing barge. A spike is a barge at the head of the center string with notches on either side. Tom tells of an accident in which an intoxicated man was letting his kid drive their boat and the kid raced up the starboard side of a tow that appeared to him to be four barges long. Sharply rounding the fourth barge, swinging to his left to cut in front of the tow, the kid suddenly, and—too late—saw a fifth barge, a spike, at the head of the center string. After crashing into its side, father, son, and boat were plowed under the starboard string. Of the operators of pleasure boats of all sizes, Mel says, "They are ignorant, ignorant, ignorant."

The crew of the Billy Joe Boling is always mindful of pleasure craft, in no small measure because they are forever hoping for "tit shots." This, I think, was the first towboater term I learned after coming aboard. It bounced off the windows of the pilothouse from dawn until dark every day. But nothing happened. From each of many hundreds of pleasure craft, there was nothing even suggesting a tit shot. I thought the captain and the crew were fantasizing, on their way to hallucinating, and probably should be committed. Now, though, Empty Pockets II, which slowed up as she drew abreast of us, puts on a burst of speed and curls around our stern and through our wake. Coming back to us on the starboard side, she picks up even more speed, and races down before us on wings of white spray.

I say to Mel, "I thought that was just a myth—that it didn't happen."

Mel says, "It happens all the time."

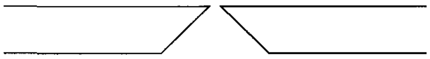
CALL ME TOM

Another clear, warm day, and Carl Dalton is painting the tow knees with Doug Gable. The tow knees are two flat columns of steel—taller than Carl or Doug—that stand on the towboat's squared-off bow and butt up against the barges it is pushing. Mel Adams, steering, looks down from the pilothouse, thirty feet above, and communicates with Carl by walkie-talkie. He is telling him, inning by inning, how the Cubs are doing against the White Sox, and how much cork the Cubs are using today. Carl, the first mate, is in equal measure strong, responsible, funny, and upbeat, always greeting with evident pleasure the gruelling physical day that begins at midnight and includes two six-hour watches. Doug, from Granite, Oklahoma, his face a ten-o'clock shadow, his teeth not altogether present or accounted for, his longish hair flowering behind his red baseball cap, suggests the legacy of the Western mountain trapper. Fourteen days off, twenty-eight days on, he used to take a Greyhound from Oklahoma to Kentucky to report for work, but for this trip he bought himself a car. He dropped out after two years at Western Oklahoma State and worked as a driller and blaster in rock quarries before becoming a deckhand on towboats. The phone rings in the pilothouse.

The crew dispatcher in Paducah asks to speak to Carl Dalton. Mel relays the word to Carl, who leaves the main deck and climbs the interior stairs to the pilothouse. Mel turns off the baseball game. Carl says hello to the crew dispatcher and listens as the dispatcher asks him in some detail about a guy he hopes to sign up as a deckhand. After listening for at least three minutes, Carl says, "He's over thirty years old and he sleeps with a night-light." There is an extended silence in the pilothouse as the dispatcher continues to speak to Carl. Then Carl says, "He's not much on the working thing." An even longer silence follows as Carl patiently listens to Paducah. Then Carl says, "I don't want him on here."

The crew dispatcher works for B&H Towing, which leases its boats from Memco, which then charters the boats; and that, in the words of our captain, "is how they busted up the unions out here." The hunt for willing-and-able deckhands is a difficult one for the dispatcher, as Carl—third-ranking person on the Billy Joe Boling and invaluable himself—is much aware. When guys are riding to Paducah for their fourteen days off, the company will call them in the van to see if they want to go at once to another boat. Carl lives in Wickliffe, about thirty miles from Paducah. He played his basketball at Ballard Memorial High School, where he dropped out in 1980, he says, "like a fool." He knows everybody. At breakfast one day, he told me, "There's not that many blacks in Wickliffe, but we're all kin."

The work is hard on deck anytime, he said, but especially in winter. The tows punch and punch again at the ice to break a trail. Sometimes at dusk they can look back and see where they started at dawn, while the deckhands tighten wires in snow or freezing rain. "You go out there to jerk up a ratchet, you fall, slip, the deck is so slick." The ice on the river may be eighteen inches thick. Sometimes a trail is broken with one barge while the fourteen other barges—each tied to the next—follow the towboat "like a train on a track." Danger may be highest in winter, but it is always present. "Duckpond" is the towboaters' term for any open space among the barges where a member of the crew could fall in. The ends of some barges are squared and vertical, the ends of others bevelled, trapezoidal, raked. The rakes are for streamlining at the head and stern ends of the tow, but they may be anywhere in the assemblage, and if rakes abut in the middle



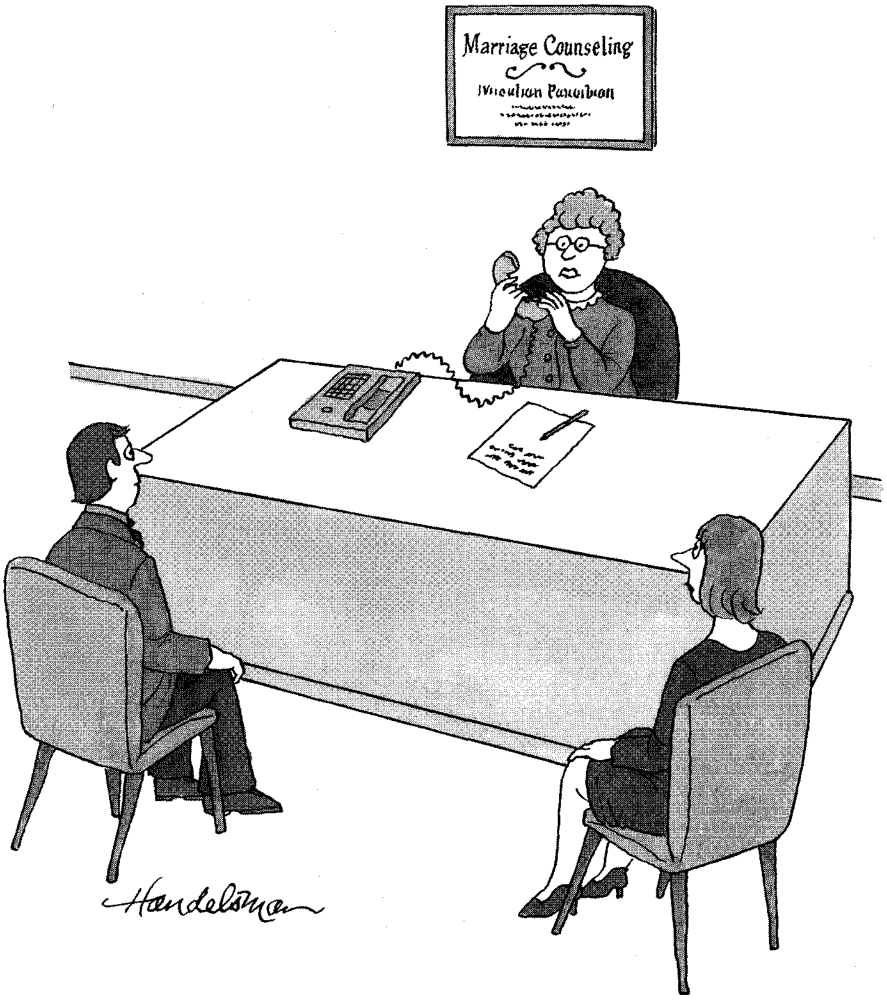
of a tow they form a duckpond. Some "oddball barges" are not quite as long as the others—a cause of additional duckponds. On the subject of hazards to deckhands, Tom Armstrong says, "Lines break, slice 'em in half like a damned banana. Or a nineteen-year-old kid falls

GUILTMAKING

off a head barge, goes under, and dies." The Billy Joe Boling has not had a lost-time accident in two years. What happened? "A guy was homesick. He really wasn't injured. He said he had a sprung back. Once he got off, he sprung back to healthy."

Of most deckhands, Tom says, "Even if they're sick, they get up there and do it." For their twelve-hour days, deckhands start at eighty dollars a day ($6.66 an hour). They work their way up to a hundred and nineteen. Resourceful, hardworking, in a class by themselves, they remind me of people I knew in Alaska, with the difference that many of the towboaters are more than a little apologetic about themselves, variously confessing their small towns and calling themselves hillbillies. The Alaskans I'm thinking of saw themselves as a class apart, meant for a different geography, without much interest in the place they called the Outside. "We may not all have come over on the same boat, but we're on the same boat now," Tom Armstrong says. And Rick Walker remarks, "There's a lot of kids out here right out of McDonald's, and they'd be better off if they'd stayed at McDonald's. But if you can handle this work, you can make fifty to eighty thousand a year without a college education or even a high-school diploma."

Tom, owner of beef cattle and rental properties, spends a part of each day meditating upon incomes higher than a captain's—how large a part of each day only he would know. The part he shares is on the cassettes he plays in the pilothouse, listening to a narrator who says, "In just a few moments, I'm going to give you the formula for getting rich," and goes on to ask, "Whose drum are you marching to, even assuming you're marching to anyone's?" Repeated reference is made to "the gold mine between your ears" and to "M.S.I."—"the great key"—multiple sources of income. "Five ideas a day is twenty-five a week—that is, if you don't think on weekends." The tapes refer to "America's results coach," and they quote Oriah Mountain Dreamer in praise of people who "refuse to die with their music still in them." That is, they cause it to pour forth before it is too late. He listens to Dan Millman quoting Ashley Montagu on Bertrand Russell and the pursuit of happiness. Among Tom's favorite books—present on a shelf in the pilothouse—is "Think and Grow Rich," by Napoleon Hill, the book that resulted after Andrew Carnegie prodded Hill to study five hundred successful people. Impulsively, Tom will start up the tapes at any moment of the day or night between six and twelve. Steering the Billy Joe Boling from light to light in the dark, he listens to "Discover the Value of Lifelong Learning" and "Twenty Minutes That Can Change Your Life." On the VHF, he advises the captain of another towboat to put cattle on land that the other captain owns near Pekin. "Then it's a farm and a tax write-off," Tom explains. "That's the way to go, brother. Money ain't in the cows, it's in the tax deduction."



"Excuse me for a moment. It's my idiot husband."

Doug Gable and Mel Adams are the only crew members who went to college, and Mel—with a degree in computer science and marine biology—is the only graduate. In the pilothouse, he listens to National Public Radio. When he is holding up—tow head near the bank, waiting for another tow to pass—I have more than once found him standing over the chart-book-and-radar cabinet, slowly turning pages, taking notes. He is in deep study and appears to be plotting some sort of course, but he is actually compiling an order from a Bass Pro Shops catalogue. The threadfin shad and the brook silverside are forage fish in Table Rock Lake—that is, the white bass eat them. Mel reads to me from an article he has saved on lure colors: "In clear water, use blue-and-chrome, black-and-chrome, black-and-gold, and anything that looks like a threadfin shad. In stained water, chartreuse." His selections include the Bandit Deep Diver, the Excalibur Fat Free Shad, and some Norman Deep Little N crankbaits in gel-coat colors: sun-green shiner, sun smoky shad. Mel grew up frog gigging, crappie fishing, and noodling—catching catfish by hand from nests in the bank ("It was risky. What if a big cat bit you or the nest included water moccasins?").

Mel has a tattoo on his right arm: a skull and wings. He says, "Actually, that's a six-pack of Mickey's barrel-mouth." In the Navy, aged twenty-two or so, in San Francisco, he drank the Mickey's barrel-mouth and went in for the skull and wings. On his other arm is an island sunset, pricked on Guam. He regrets both tattoos. "It's all the go now—that and body piercin'. Back then, if you had a tattoo you were a biker or a sailor." Mel was a chief petty officer. He sailed on ships of many kinds—guided-missile cruiser, fast combat supply ship, aircraft carrier. He was six years on Guam, six in Hawaii. Aurora, his wife, is Filipina. She grew up near Olongapo, a Death March site on the Bataan Peninsula, where her parents had a fish farm. Her father was a shipwright at Subic Bay. Mel and Aurora have three teen-aged kids, one on her way to becoming a registered nurse, another a performing musician hoping for Juilliard.

Mel once piloted a tow from Corpus Christi to suburban Chicago carrying eleven thousand tons of black oil. He went sixteen hundred miles up the Gulf-coastal waterways, the Atchafalaya River, the Lower, the Upper, and the Illinois River to Lemont. And now, after one more night on the Illinois, dawn appears. He calls Aurora and awakens her. Two miles out of Peoria Lock, he is southbound, approaching Clark Dock, on the right bank, four miles up from the Pekin wiggles. The Billy Waxler, with two barges, is tied to the Clark Dock, so Mel, in his words, is "favorin' them red buoys" along the left side of the channel to give himself plenty of clearance as he passes the other tow. Having come up to the pilothouse before breakfast, I have been here since we left the lock a few minutes after five, in ample time for the next event.

This is the next event. At 5:25 A.M., the Billy Joe Boling and the fifteen barges instantly lose a hundred per cent of their momentum and come to a sickening, shuddering, completely unexpected, and convulsive stop. This eleven-hundred-and-forty-five-foot vessel has not just been sliding in mud; it has run aground hard. The port wing wire has snapped, and, as we will learn soon enough, seven other wires have snapped, too. The port wing wire runs from the last barge in the port string to the Billy Joe Boling itself. Now, ghastly, that barge and the one in front of it begin to drift slowly away. Grain and corn excluded, half a million dollars' worth of barges are taking off on their own for New Orleans. Tom Armstrong appears in the pilothouse like a genie. It is, after all, five-thirty in the morning and time for him to relieve Mel and take over the hapless sticks. Simultaneously, Tom and Mel reach for the general alarm. Tom raises its red plastic cap. Mel throws the switch.

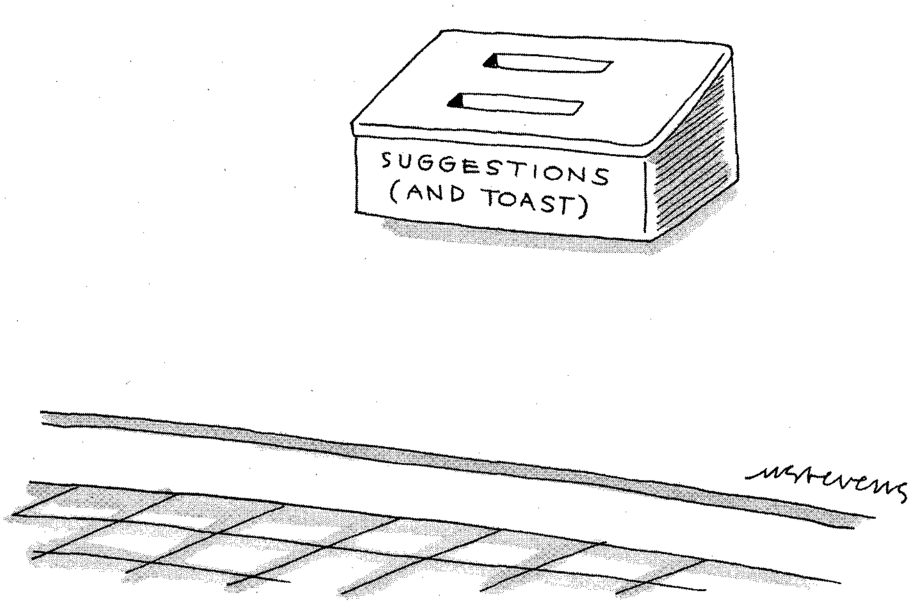
Every crewman is on the deck anyway, at the changing of the watch. The gap between the grounded vessel and the two loose barges widens. Fifteen feet. Twenty feet. There may be a chance to catch a line. Doug Gable, who has disappeared from the main deck, reappears with a bright-white brand-new line, a large eye at one end. Coils in one hand, eye in the other, he heaves the line, attempting to lasso a steel, sausage-shaped cavel on the barge. He has time only for the one throw. The line falls into the water. The barges drift farther away.

Mel, inspired, reverses the throttle of the port-side engine and gives it full power. The reversed wheel wash drives a No. 10 rapid upstream at the side of the Billy Joe and into the escaping barges. Slowly, magically, the runaway barges forget New Orleans, go back upstream, and return exactly to their original positions in the port string. Mel says, "Those barges, when they hit, looked rared up—you know, pushed up in the water. Anybody says they never ran aground on the Illinois River it's because they never ran the Illinois River."

In the space of a few minutes, Rick Walker, second mate, lays twenty feet of frayed and broken wing wire across a wire cutter and trims it back with a sledgehammer. He picks up the intact new end, curls four feet of it into a new eye, splices it, and leaves a foot of protruding tail. He lays the new eye over a cavel on the stern port-string barge. The additional wire has come off a winch like fishing line off a reel. Rick with steel cable can make loops like an angler. The winch tightens the new wing wire. Up the tow, Rick and others replace the three fore-and-aft wires and four breast wires that also broke. The port lead barge remains stucker than a postage stamp. Knocking keepers off pelican hooks with sledgehammers, deckhands detach the port lead barge so that Tom will be able to back up the rest of the tow and, with a lock line, yank the port lead barge free.

"There's one aground every day up here," Tom says. "It's not a deep river. If you can't back it off, you have to take the barges apart and dig it off. All it costs is time."

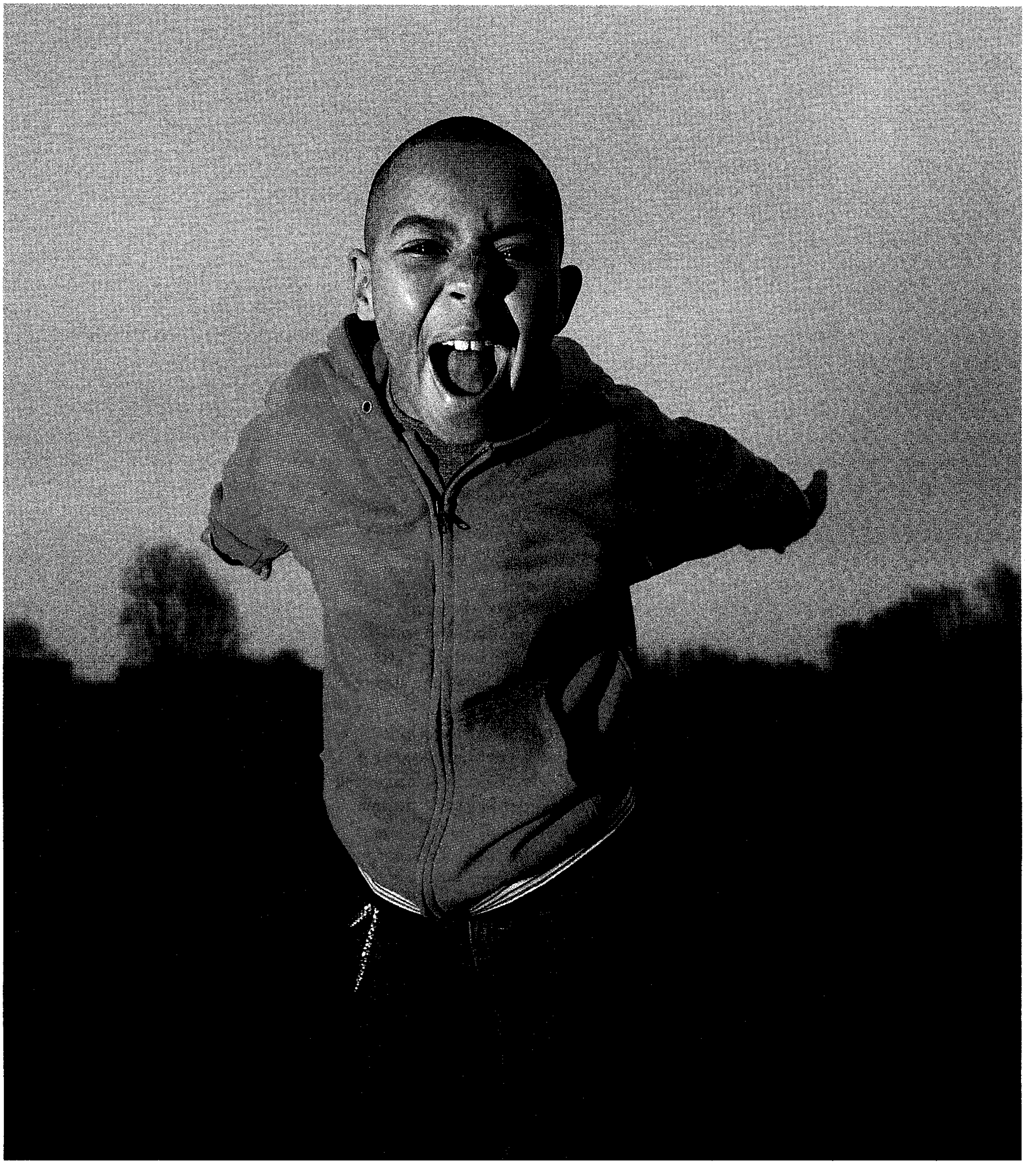
Mel, turning at the head of the stairs, has a parting word for me. He says, "When you write all this down, my name is Tom Armstrong." ♦



FICTION

TRIUMPH OF THE SOUTHSIDE LADYJACKS

BY JAMES ELLIS THOMAS



"Get up there, ball!"

They used to be called the Southside Ladybashers, but Brenda Summers had effectively argued that a softball team full of black women from the Acacia Heights housing projects could do without the unflattering connotations of the name "Ladybashers."

"Get up there, ball!"

"Bashers," of course, had come from the indisputable fact that Brenda and her teammates bashed the softball like it owed them money. But as of tonight's game they were Ladybashers no more. Now they "jacked" the ball, as Brenda had pitched it to her teammates last week. They jacked balls.

"Aggressively," said Brenda, as she paced the dugout, addressing her teammates on the bench. "When we were the Ladybashers, everybody suspected that we were the ones who were getting bashed."

"How do you know that?" asked Faye Danzey, and Brenda Summers thought to herself, *Of course, it would be Faye Danzey*. "Bashed," said Faye, glaring at Brenda. "I didn't see you standin' at the box office, pollin' nobody, Chipmunk. That's in *your* mind."

"Maybe," said Brenda, dusting off the front of her new jersey. "But from now on we do the jackin' around here, girlfriends."

Abruptly, Brenda began to perform a cheerleading routine. A spirit emergency had presented itself, and, as self-appointed rally captain, Brenda Summers had no choice but to respond. Arms akimbo, cleats spread wide: "BE AGGRESSIVE! BE AGGRESSIVE! B-E-A-G-G—"

Her cheer was promptly interrupted by a barely dodged slap from Faye Danzey. Brenda backed away from the bench a step. However, she continued her routine, arm gestures and dance moves accelerating.

"Ain't you grown?" asked another teammate, perturbed. "Such behavior on your part is what's drawin' all these hateful mosquitoes, Brenda Summers."

Nobody else commented, much less felt the need to join Brenda in her cheer. Of the Ladyjacks' roster, there were five women sitting on the dugout bench. Some were looking out at the game, some were swatting mosquitoes, and some were doing both while chugging from their water bottles. Other Ladyjacks were in various stages of preparation outside the dugout. Collectively, the team was somewhat tired of Brenda Summers. Ever since she had started this name-change crusade, her college-dropout affliction had been working overtime. Didn't nobody give a damn about all that. It was too hot to give a damn about all that. A Ladyjack was at bat—that's what Brenda Summers should've been giving a damn about.

"Brenda, you need to sit your ass down on this bench," said Faye Danzey, clapping a handful of mosquitoes to death between her bulky hands. "You keep on, you gonna wind up gettin' jacked by your own teammates, *lady*."

"Clever," said Brenda, still performing her cheerleader routine. "Typical Faye Danzey. *Of course*, you're not content with the new uniforms. You're never content with anything, Faye. You have no personal affirmation of spirit."

"These new uniforms itch," said Faye. "I already done told you that."

"Wash it," said Brenda.

"Already done washed it," said Faye.

"Wash it again."

"In the middle of the game?"

"Faye, I don't hear anybody else complaining."

"Brenda, that's because ain't nobody else gonna walk up and snatch you baldheaded. You're the biggest mosquito out here, you know that?"

Brenda continued to dance. She stuck her tongue out at Faye but made sure not to stick it out too far. Faye Danzey, their powerhouse slugger, was a considerable mass of woman. Her attempts to yank out Brenda's tongue at any and all sightings were as consistent as the slugger's cornrow hair style. Faye was fat and defiant, the she-Babe of the Southside Ladyjacks. And if that didn't say enough about Faye Danzey, the knife scarring below her double chins said far too much. To Brenda, it looked as if somebody had tried to slice the rolls of fat off Faye's neck.

"You think I'm playin'," said Faye, glaring at Brenda, who was still dancing. "I know this much—you better save some of that 'personal affirmation of spirit' to knock me in after I get on first base. Better yet, why don't you come over here and fill them cheeks up for the winter, Chipmunk. Munch, munch, munch, munch, munch!"

Now the bench was laughing. Brenda turned her back to look out at the game. Despite the current grade-school high jinks, the Ladyjacks were all grown women. At twenty-five years of age, Brenda Summers was the youngest, but age had nothing to do with her exuberance on this particular night.

"Get up there, ball!" shouted Coach Biv, demanding the fate of the at-bat Ladyjack's swing. "Get up there, ball!"

Coach Biv patrolled the edge of the diamond like a sentry. He was the oldest member of the Ladyjacks outfit, mature enough to have seen the Negro Baseball Leagues as a kid. To Coach Biv, every second of the game was a spirit emergency. The gray-headed black man rallied history itself by willing—and expecting—nothing but the best from his team. In fact, Coach Biv had championed Brenda Summers's notion of changing their name from Ladybashers to Ladyjacks. The former name had been inherited. Coach Biv always championed change.

"All right, Faye Danzey," said Coach Biv, moving toward the dugout. "I want to see you up off that bench. You know you up after Cheryl. Let's go, let's go, let's go!"

"Old man, you better pour out that hip flask," said Faye Danzey, flattening her cleats with a straining rise. "It's eleven to zip. Them white girls still at home, eatin' Atkins."

Again the bench laughed. Watching the mighty Faye Danzey level the steps of the dugout with her laborious exit, Brenda pulsated with energy. Aggressive, aggressive. That was the key. B-E-A-G-G-R-E-S-S-I-V-E! She hadn't felt this anxious since she had written off to several black celebrities for a "good black parent" car loan. She could feel it in the air tonight. Change. Humidity. New grass. New hope.

"Mind in the game down there, Summers," said Coach Biv. "Starry-eyed. I can't have that tonight. Whatever you thinkin' about, you better go ahead and work it out before you pick up that bat. Showtime, baby."

"But—"

"Showtime, baby. Showtime."

What Brenda Summers was thinking about was the fact that her son was in the stands. She hadn't seen her son in more than four years. She had just brought him to her transplanted

GETTY IMAGES

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home here in Alabama—all the way from California. By bus. That was a lot to think about.

On both sides of the home-plate umpire, the aluminum bleachers bowed under the weight of the spectator crowds. Tonight was the first night of the women's softball season. Tonight was the first night of the season, but it may as well have been the tenth night during a rain delay as far as the rival team and their fans were concerned. Paris Touch Home Décor was in the throes of their own spirit emergency. It had started during the first inning, when Faye Danzey had executed a satellite-smashing grand slam. Three innings, three Faye Danzey highlight reels later, the score was now Ladyjacks, eleven, Paris Touch, zero. The only perceptible sound coming from the Paris Touch bleachers was the incessant smack of palms slapping mosquitoes against bitten white skin. Paris Touch Home Décor and their fans were all white. The Southside Ladyjacks and their fans were all black. No exceptions on the diamond, no exceptions in the stands. The officiating staff was all white, but the concessions staff was not.

By the time Faye Danzey had waddled up to home plate with her bat, Brenda Summers, too, had exited the dugout. Currently, Brenda stood near the chain-link fence that separated the playing field from the Ladyjacks' stands. Her eyes scanned the wall of faces, searching for her kid. She grew nervous when she couldn't find him. Alexander was six years old, and Brenda knew that he was curious about his new surroundings. He was also precocious. Among his many talents, Brenda had discovered, her son was adept at gathering information. Alexander had not only researched his Alabama destination before the bus trip but had downloaded gigabytes of knowledge concerning the entire Southeastern United States. This had made for a highly informative bus ride, as their fellow-travellers could attest. Brenda was delighted with her son's thirst for knowledge. His mind itself was a veritable search engine. But the real world lacked filters, as Brenda well knew. She was on the verge of panicking when she failed to spot her son in the Ladyjacks' stands.

"Hey, Mom," came a voice from behind the dugout, on the spectator side of the fence. "Look at me—I just bought some crack."

"What?" said Brenda.

"Cracklings," said Alexander, producing a carton full of pork rinds. "I just bought some *cracklings*. 'The crisp part remaining after hog fat or poultry fat has been rendered.' Webster's New World College Dictionary, Fourth Edition, Mom, come on. I was offered crack cocaine, too, but that's not nearly as regional."

"Alexander," said Brenda firmly. "I am not telling you again where it is that I want you to sit. Right there, right on the front row, right next to Miss Hattie."

Alexander turned around and looked at the kindly old woman who was sitting on the bleachers. She resembled his previous keepers, Grandfather and Grandmother Summers, back in California. His grandparents had been loving guardians, no doubt, but to be under the care of Miss Hattie, however briefly, seemed like a familiar turn in the wrong direction.

"Aw, come on, Mom," said Alexander, showing his age by fidgeting near the fence.

"Play your Game Boy if you're bored, Alexander," said Brenda.

"Aw, come on, Mom, come on. Cracklings."

"What did I just tell you to do?"

He wasn't bored, thought Brenda, that was the problem. He was acting more hyper than she was. Despite the fact that they had just got in this morning from their three-day cross-country bus trip, her six-year-old son had been bouncing around the ballpark as if he *had* bought something illegal. Not that she trusted the oily, brown, and undoubtedly salty snack food that he was carrying (it looked like deep-fried Styrofoam). Sensory overload enthralled Alexander. The culture shock was too acute. His eyes were darting around, his fingers were greasy. When he slapped at the mosquitoes, she watched him check his little palms for blood.

"Summers!" shouted Coach Biv, loud enough to reach the fence from the edge of the diamond. "Every time I turn around, you up over there at that fence!"

"I'm checking on my kid," said

BY SMALL AND SMALL: MIDNIGHT TO 4 A.M.

For eleven years I have regretted it,
regretted that I did not do what
I wanted to do as I sat there those
four hours watching her die. I wanted
to crawl in among the machinery
and hold her in my arms, knowing
the elementary, leftover bit of her
mind would dimly recognize it was me
carrying her to where she was going.

—*Jack Gilbert*

Brenda. "But I'm into the game. Faye hasn't even taken her first swing."

"Brenda Summers, you can kiss my fat ass," said Faye, staring down the home-plate umpire in anticipation of his protesting her language. "Hey, California boy! Hey, refugee! Throw me some of them cracklins, baby. You don't know what to do with that goodness! *Hakuna matata* means 'share hot pork' down here!"

"No, it doesn't!" yelled Alexander. "I would've learned that when I did a search on the cultural cuisines and popular colloquialism of the Southeastern United States on the Internet!"

"Huh?" said Faye.

Brenda touched the tips of her fingers to Alexander's fingers through the chain-link fence. She shook her head. Like mother like son, she thought—two fish with varying degrees of how long they had been out of water. Regardless, Brenda smiled, but her beloved only child failed to smile back.

"Alexander," said Brenda, with a bus-weary sigh. "Miss Hattie was nice enough to say yes when I asked her to keep an eye on you."

"I get that," said Alexander, irritated. "But 'Miss Hattie' wasn't in the search results, either, Mom."

An immediate heat broke out over Brenda's skin. She felt as though she had just been caught in a lie. Alexander hadn't anticipated a Miss Hattie after four years of his grandparents. It didn't matter that the babysitting was situational at present. Brenda's son was doing a search of his circumstances—both present and past. "Prepare for more of that," Brenda told herself, as she watched Alexander retreat to the stands. Everything askew in his brilliant young life eventually linked back to his mom.

Six years ago, Brenda Summers had got pregnant.

There was more preamble to the crisis of Brenda Summers than that, but no one (none of her teammates, at least) tuned in until the familiars of "baby," and "dropped out of school," and "haven't seen Alexander's father since" were mentioned. Her teammates had tuned in to that part of Brenda's drama as if it were a soap opera. "All My Neglected Children." The Ladyjacks had never inquired into the whereabouts of Alexander's father. To them, that part of Brenda's drama qualified as a rerun, a story that many of them had experienced firsthand.

Six years ago, Brenda Summers had been a sophomore at the private liberal-arts college where one of her teammates now cleaned toilets. At that point in Brenda Summers's life, the crisis had been more existential than dramatic. She didn't know where she fit in. She didn't know if she wanted to fit in. There were plenty of people who were willing to help Brenda fit in, and some of them wound up fitting into her.

Six years ago, Faye Danzey weighed considerable pounds less. That was Faye Danzey's favorite response to the navel-gazing in Brenda's preamble about fitting in. "Yeah, yeah, yeah," Faye would say, yawning. "You're a misfit. And at one point in my life I used to be slender. I used to weigh eight pounds and two ounces, at one point in my life. Since then, I haven't been able to fit into a damn thing, ei-

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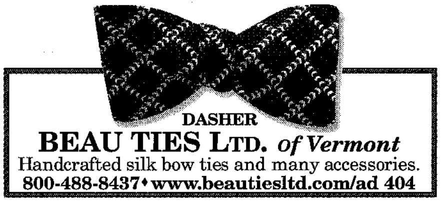

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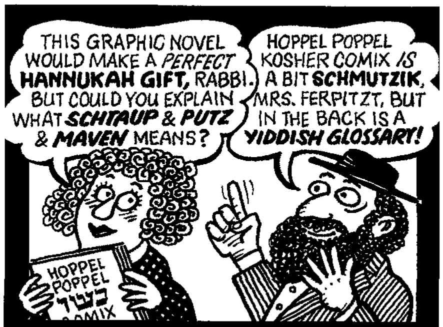
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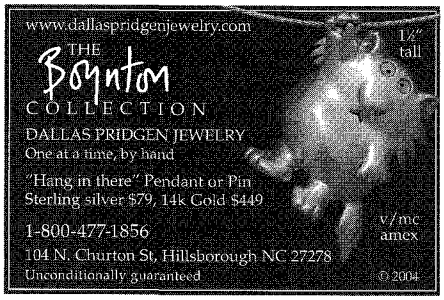
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ther. What a crazy, mixed-up world."

The non-boring parts, the *aggressive* parts of Brenda's tale of exile, centered on her son. The disgruntled kid beneath the Lakers cap (thank God, Shaquille O'Neal had moved southward), Alexander now looked as out of place in the stands as she had looked trying to claw out a life in this town six years ago. A California native, a nineteen-year-old mother, a depressed college dropout who eventually wound up working at an Alabama chicken-processing plant. What a crazy, mixed-up world, indeed.

"Drugs," Faye Danzey concluded, after suffering through Brenda's preamble their first week on the job together. "You're pretty, you're smart. Athletically skilled. Had something goin' on for yourself, then you got caught up with these so-and-sos down here, and you messed it all up. That happens every nine seconds, Brenda Summers."

"Did that happen to you, Faye Danzey?" Brenda asked. Faye responded by snapping open a chicken.

Brenda had met Faye Danzey, a fellow (community) college dropout, while working at the plant. Faye Danzey was equally plainspoken about her own personal existential crisis. "The next person," she had said to an inquisitive Brenda Summers. "And I mean the very next person who asks me to explain all the oh-so-obvious mistakes I done made in my life, I'm gonna take one of these chickens and beat them unconscious with it. Work is work. I'm glad to have a job. But the fact that I would use a chicken to beat someone unconscious oughtta make my state of affairs self-explanatory, don't you think?"

Faye Danzey lived in the Acacia Heights housing projects. Brenda Summers lived in an apartment complex nearby. As time went on, Brenda found that she enjoyed the massive woman's equally massive defiance. Faye defied everything, it seemed. Her bosses, her bills, her back pain—yes, she paid them their due, but she refused to give them the satisfaction of her fret.

The other then Southside Ladybashers Brenda had also become acquainted with at work, or at certain clubs, or both. Around this time, Brenda's father and mother had decided to stop criticizing the oh-so-obvious mistakes that Brenda was making in her life and, instead, intervened. Father and Mother Summers flew in from California after months of telephone battles and handwritten arguments (which, evidently, had occurred before Brenda got pregnant, before she dropped out of school, before her plane had even landed in Alabama). Brenda's parents promptly had her declared unfit to raise baby Alexander. Child protective services, court dates, aborted attempts to flee with her son ensued. And Father Summers had felt no qualms about using his daughter's train wreck of a college life to sabotage her defense. How could he not? She had left a shameful pile of debris lying around.

Brenda's parents took Alexander back to California, back to her previous home, just when he reached the age of two. *Just* when he reached the age of two: Brenda lit the candles on his birthday cake at approximately the same time that her son and his grandparents became airborne, headed west.

Time was slow to heal Brenda Summers. Her personal affirmation of spirit had all the conviction of Faye Danzey's attempts to lose weight. Brenda quit drinking. Brenda quit drugs. Brenda quit men, then relapsed on all three. Prompted by their co-workers at the plant and by their friends at certain clubs, Brenda and Faye both joined the women's softball league. The sport invigorated. The sport rejuvenated.

Somehow Faye Danzey wound up gaining more weight (owing, perhaps, to her fondness for concession cracklings). The competitiveness and the camaraderie of the then Southside Ladybashers served to reawaken, to *stimulate* in Brenda Summers, the parts of her that she had allowed herself to neglect. Her love for athleticism returned. Her love for music returned, although the son that she loved to sing to was long gone. Brenda's love for her son, however, had never abandoned her, nor had she ever abandoned that love, despite

the painful acknowledgment, the painful truth that she had, in spirit, abandoned baby Alexander when he needed her most.

It was during a typically despondent evening that an instant message popped up while she was downloading Karla Bonoff's "Cold Wind Blow." Brenda had always loved that song, and then, suddenly and mysteriously, it started loving her back.

Hey, Mom. Guess what? Shaq Fu!

Not the most poetic turn of phrase from her bright little hope, but God, did it bring forth the tears. The message was completely unexpected. Brenda had no idea how her son had located her via the Internet, and later (after they had verified each other's identity—he knew more about her than she knew about him) she would be surprised to discover that the search was entirely Alexander's doing. She had given birth to a wunderkind, who was, fortunately, wondering about his own mother. She wasn't quite sure how the mystical tenets of Shaq Fu, the winsome aura of the then Laker Shaquille O'Neal, figured into this sudden miracle, but she loved her son, and she loved him all the more for trying to explain it—in all his youthful zest.

Aw, come on, Mom. Shaq Fu!

Gradually, Brenda learned to stop feeling sorry for herself. Gradually, she got a mean-on, and she started to fight. There had been no shame in asking for help. Substance-abuse counselling and life-management guidance fostered her personal affirmation of spirit. That being said, she still hadn't received a car loan. However, her dedication to improving her life had genuinely impressed her parents. And now Brenda Summers had been granted custody of her son on a trial basis. Her bright little hope had returned.

"Get up there, ball!" Coach Biv commanded, drawing Brenda's attention back to the game. "All right now, Faye Danzey, just because you the hero of the day don't mean you can slip out of that cape."

"I'm bored," said Faye, yawning at the Paris Touch pitcher. "She up there tryin' to pitch like she Randy Johnson—knowin' good and well she got a bid down on Martha Stewart's prison salad—munch, munch, munch, munch, munch!"

"Faaaaye," muttered Brenda through clenched teeth. If it were not for the fact that the umpire, not to mention the Ladyjacks' opponents, was too obviously cowed by Faye Danzey's presence, the Ladyjacks' she-Babe would long since have been ejected from the game. Trash-talking, however encrypted, was a big no-no in their sport. But Faye Danzey was bigger.

"Let's go, Ladyjacks!" chanted the fans. "Let's go, Ladyjacks!" rocking the stands.

"Summers!" yelled Coach Biv, tapping a finger against his head. "Showtime, baby!"

Brenda walked over to accept her favorite bat from the cutest, littlest equipment manager, a teammate's four-year-old daughter. The girl could only drag the aluminum bat on the ground. Toothy and clumsy, the cutest, littlest equipment manager always got a round of applause from the Ladyjacks' fans as soon as she appeared.

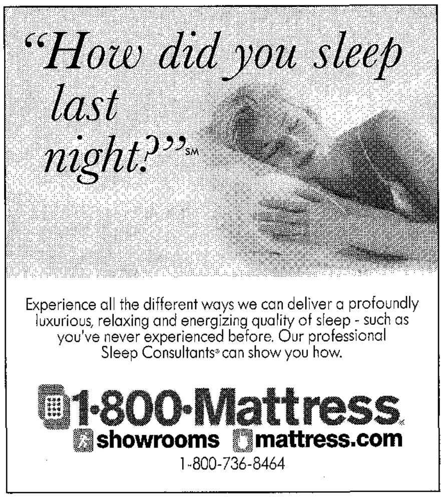
Finally approaching the on-deck circle, Brenda checked the scoreboard as if it had miraculously changed: Ladyjacks, eleven; Paris Touch, zero. Faye had been right again. Paris Touch bored—at least, in regard to their athleticism. Other aspects of the opposing team, *certain* aspects, as Brenda regarded them, were much more enthralling.

In particular, the Paris Touch pitcher displayed a rather provocative hip thrust whenever she threw the ball. The woman had big legs, those big Southern legs that Brenda had grown to appreciate during her years as a transplant. And she *grunted.* At earsplitting decibels, the Paris Touch pitcher grunted—deeply, gutturally, *unabashedly* cathartic—each release on the mound bringing a quick, whirling whip of her blond ponytail. Fast-pitch gives you a good estimation of potential hip velocity, thought Brenda Summers (unabashedly). And, goodness gracious, did that girl have a grunt!

Unnnngh!

Like two scissoring Maria Sharapovas trying to twist open a pickle jar the hard way. Damn, girl, I'd shock you like an Eighth Street cell phone, thought Brenda, as some of her teammates were known to say. Girl, you better come up off that—

Suddenly, a bomb exploded in the vicinity of home plate. Brenda was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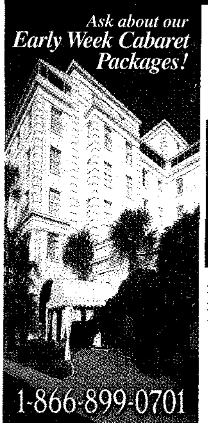

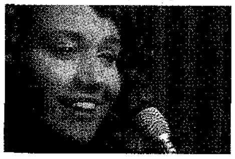

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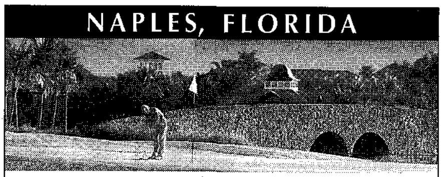

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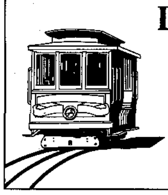

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shocked by the pitcher, rather than the other way around. The Paris Touch arm had launched a dedicated tank-cracker, blasting the receiving catcher's glove with a powerful smack. A wisp of orange smoke immediately rose from the leather. The crowd went "Wooooo!" on both sides of the umpire. The cutest, littlest equipment manager had to duck to avoid the catcher's mitt, hurled hotly in hand-shaking disbelief.

"Strike!" yelled the home-plate umpire.

"Shut up!" yelled Faye Danzey.

Meanwhile, there was trouble brewing on the mound. Rather than pitch to Faye Danzey, the Paris Touch chucker started throwing dangerous head shots. *Ziiiiip!* They flew past Faye Danzey's helmet. *Pow!* They exploded into the wall behind the plate. Anybody could guess that it was the lopsided score that had driven the pitcher to snap. Anybody could guess that, but Brenda Summers *knew* that only Faye Danzey's mouth could provoke such a volcanic reaction.

"*Hakuna matata*," sang Faye, taunting the Paris Touch pitcher. "Look at these Southside so-and-sos holdin' you down to zero, Paris Touch. On opening day? Girl, what *must* you be thinkin'?"

Decapitation, thought Brenda, as she observed the escalating tension on the field. The batting stance alone that Faye Danzey had adopted threatened nothing short of public disturbance. She didn't lean forward. She didn't lean back. Faye Danzey stood ramrod straight, stomach proud, ass unashamed. Her fingers squeezed the neck of the bat as if it were the last living chicken of the shift. Perfectly vertical, she held it, arrogantly she held it, stubbornly she held it—her wind-splitter just waiting to chop.

"Let's go, Ladyjacks!" chanted the fans. "Let's go, Ladyjacks!" rocking the stands.

The fact that the Paris Touch pitcher had yet to say anything in response to Faye Danzey's goading worried Brenda. Sure, it was more sportsmanlike to keep your cool and let the umpire deal with such verbal violations. But the home-plate official had yet to ask Faye for his testicles back, much less warn Paris Touch about their angry, loose cannon of an arm. The pitcher was glowering atop the mound, shooting daggers from her blue eyes, her sweaty blond hair plastered to the sides of her scowling face. When she didn't throw, she didn't grunt—a silenced weapon, cocked and ready to fire.

To add to the mounting tension, Faye Danzey was known to lead the Ladyjacks' swarm onto the field (which Brenda had always participated in, but in front of her kid?). And the fact that Faye had yet to do so in response to the pitcher's gunning worried Brenda all the more. For such a big woman, there appeared not to be one bead of sweat between Faye Danzey's cornrows and the rolls of fat on her knife-scarred neck.

"Look at you," said Faye, smirking at the seething pitcher. "Southside do bad, y'all ain't happy. Southside do *good*, y'all ain't happy. Southside do outright phenomenal—"

The Paris Touch softball rocketed toward home plate. Brenda had only seen the pitcher's hips wiggle. There had been no perceptible windup. The game they played was fast-pitch softball—underhanded, body-shaking, rapid-motion missile strikes—there had to be a perceptible windup.

Yet, spliced between the word "phenomenal" and the involuntary blink that shuddered Brenda's view, the Paris Touch softball had shot like a bullet. It flew far (approximately forty-three feet), and it flew stealthily (no audible grunt), and it flew fast (a white mirage).

And Faye Danzey hit it.

Wham!

"—outright phenomenal," said Faye Danzey, completing her speech. "And the world just stops making sense."

Brenda didn't see where the ball went. It went up. Of course, it went up. At a moon-punching angle, the ball flew up, up, up. Most people saw it go up. Nobody saw it come down. Nobody could testify that they saw it come down. Not even the Paris Touch fans could put the final destination of the screaming white sphere anywhere other than in outer space.

A hush fell over the diamond. No slapping of mosquitoes or celebratory cheering could be heard from either side of the stands.

There was a full minute of craning necks, yet no sign of the awesomely "jacked" ball. No ball dropped to earth. No ball fell back to terra. Everybody was staring up at the night sky—players, coaches, fans, ballpark staff, and even the cutest, littlest equipment manager—

all searching for the softball that had left orbit above the dome of the ballpark lights.

And
would
not
come
back
down.

"If there's a God in the heavens," said Faye Danzey, observing the sea of upturned faces. "May the ghost of my eighth-grade girls' P.E. coach be sittin' upon you all. Munch, munch, munch, munch, munch."

As if that didn't tweak the miracle enough, Faye unexpectedly lumbered back toward the Ladyjacks' dugout. She didn't even walk to first base, much less run to it. What she did do was ignore the fantastical. People were wondering why that ball hadn't obeyed the rules of gravity. They were too stunned to wonder why the woman who had hit that softball was disobeying the rules of the game. Presumably, Faye Danzey was outing herself by not running her bases. But, of course, she had long stopped giving a damn about that.

"*Stay* up there, ball!" yelled Coach Biv, hopping up and down as he pulled out his hip flask. "You little hateful white *cracka!*"

"Cracker," said Alexander Summers, looking upward from the stands. "A person or device that cracks. A firecracker. A thin, crisp wafer or biscuit. Poor white—contemptuous term. A person born or living in Florida or Georgia—humorous usage. Hey, Mom! Where were the 'Smokey and the Bandit' movies set?"

Brenda did not know the answer to that question. Nor was she quite sure what to make of Coach Biv's impromptu outburst, or, for that matter, of the apparent outer-space location of the softball that had inspired it. To Brenda Summers, the Paris Touch pitcher and the Ladyjacks slugger had both been equally stimulating in their volcanic clash. And people were astonished by the heights of the eruption? Would the spinning, spanked ball ever come back down to earth?

All Brenda Summers knew for certain was that she could see her bright little hope in the stands, gazing up at the stars. The vision made her radiate with just as much pride as when she had opened the first box of the new Ladyjacks uniforms. Three-day bus trip, a life above water—there was no way that she was going to have her son miss the mighty, mighty Ladyjacks' dominating début. She smiled, renewed in her cheering, joining the awestruck crowd in staring up, up, up.

And
that's
when
the
ball
came
down
down
down.

"I caught it!" yelled Alexander, waving the stitch-popped proof in his hands. "Mom, look at me! I caught it! I caught the ball! How cool is *this*?"

Immediately, Brenda Summers dropped her bat in the on-deck circle. She ran back toward the fence. Her son was dancing on top of the bleachers where she had told him to sit, right next to Miss Hattie, right there in the front row, right where the ball had dropped from the firmament like a God-tossed peach. Alexander leaped from the stands, running down to the field to rejoice with his mother, meeting her at the open fence gate.

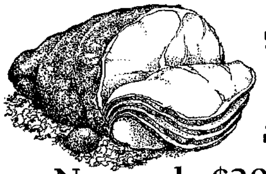
"Wow, what a catch!" yelled Brenda Summers, as she hugged her long-lost son, her long-lost hope. "How did you do that, Alexander?"

"Aw, Mom, come on! You know it's just my Shaq Fu!"

Faye Danzey paused a few steps outside the dugout. She looked up at the sky. She looked down at Alexander. She looked back up at the sky. She looked back down at Alexander. The softball that she had hit was now clenched in the young boy's hands—exploded out of its seams, miraculous hang time forgotten—its white punctured rind bobbing behind Brenda Summers's back as the mother and her child embraced.

There it was, the softball that Faye Danzey had hit, pressed against the fabric of what used to be a Ladybashers' jersey. Now the jersey read "Southside Ladyjacks." Faye Danzey's jersey read "Southside Ladyjacks" as well, and suddenly Faye Danzey decided that her new jersey no longer itched.

"Well, I'll be dogged," said Faye Danzey, staring at the celebrating family. "Joy in Mudville, but, evidently, not a lick of magic. Well . . . maybe just a lick." ♦



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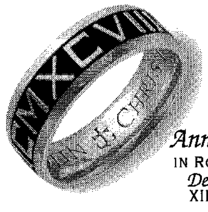

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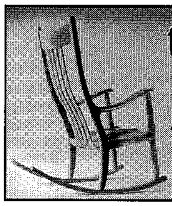

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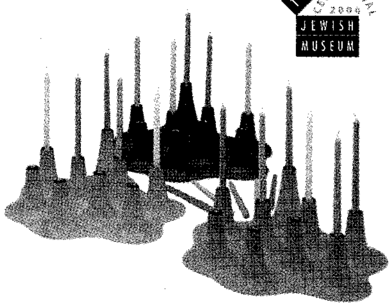

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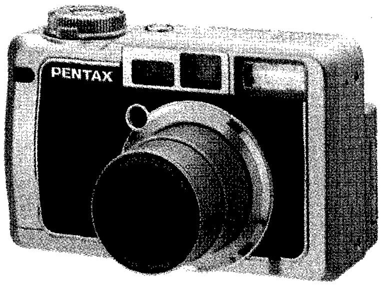

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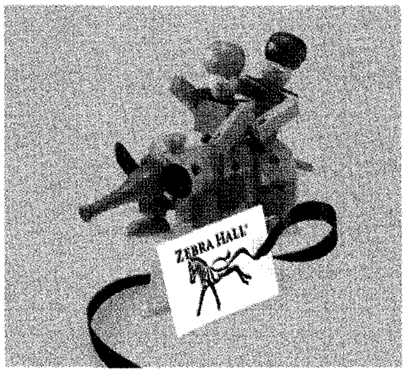

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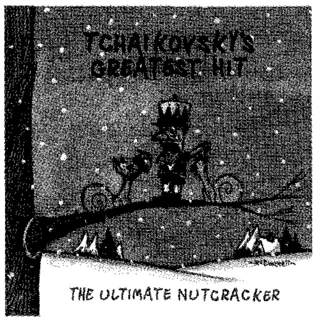

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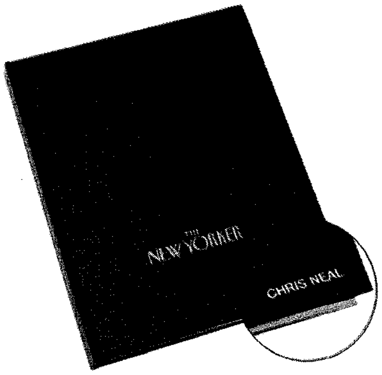

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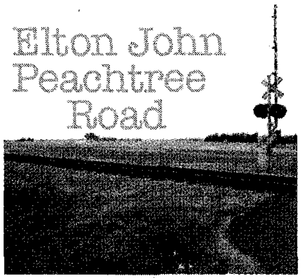

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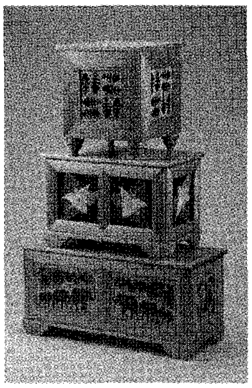

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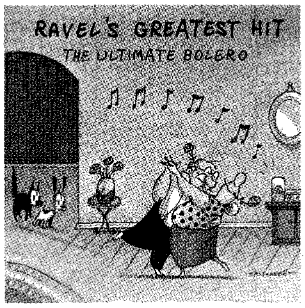

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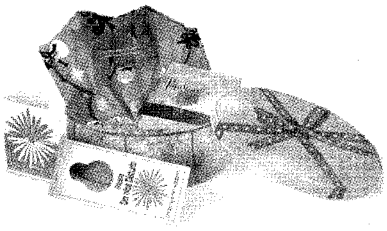

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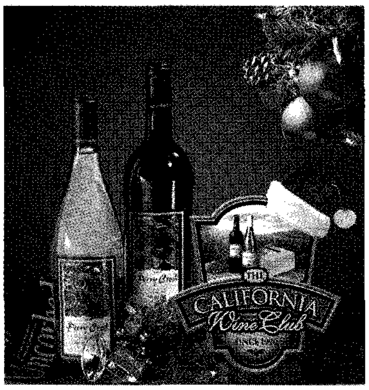

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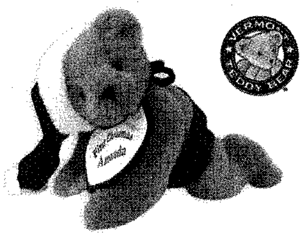

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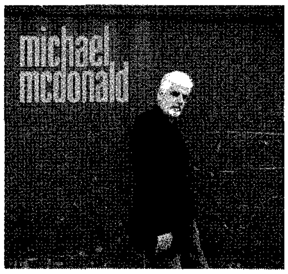

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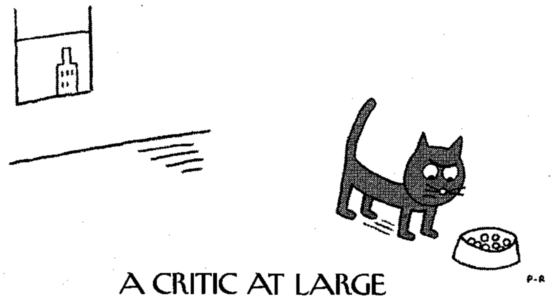

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A walk through the new Modern.

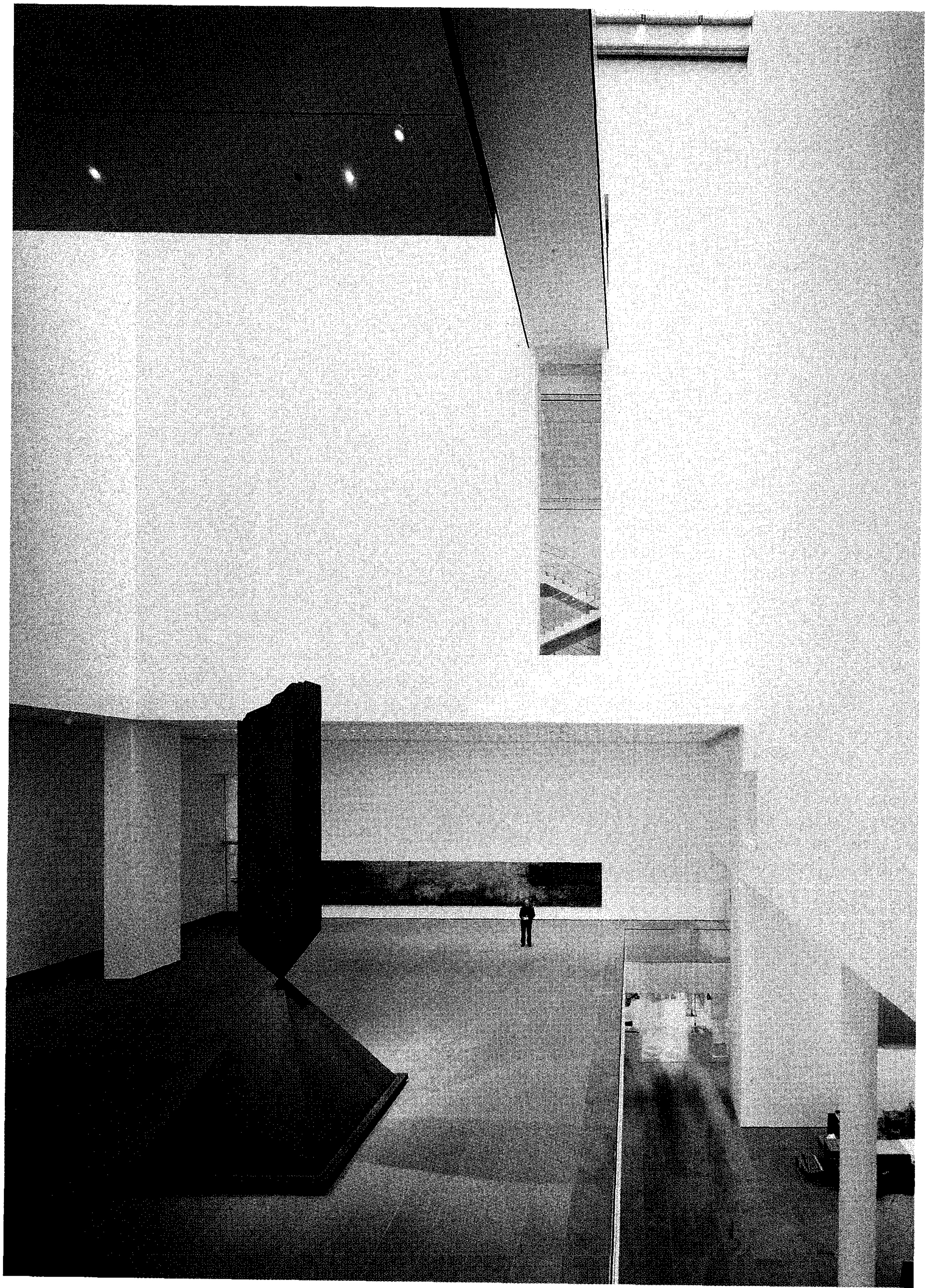
BY JOHN UPDIKE

Times Square has been sanitized and skyscraperized; the subway cars are brightly lit inside and graffiti-free inside and out. New York is going pristine. It is not easy, while gingerly stepping over loose floorboards and extension cords as thick as boa constrictors, to picture the new Museum of Modern Art in every tidy and clean-swept detail, but enough was on view last month to persuade this visitor that the final effect will be immaculate, rectilinear, capacious, and chaste. Whether or not more could be asked of a museum, of a *modern* museum, I don't know. The white interiors, chamber upon chamber, some already hung with old friends from MOMA's collection and some as bare as a freshly plastered storage closet, gave, a few weeks shy of their unveiling to the public, the impression of a condition delicately balanced between presence and absence. The architect, Yoshio Taniguchi, is Japanese, and a riddling Zen reticence presided over the acres of white wall and white-oak floor, the countless beady little halogen spotlights on their discreetly recessed tracks, the sheets of light-filtering "fritted" glass with their tiny pale strips of baked-in ceramic, and the hushed escalators, whose oily works, not yet functional, were exposed to view and to the ministrations of workmen. Looking into these gears laid bare put me in mind, nostalgically, of the early Giacometti sculpture, "Woman with Her Throat Cut," that used to lie on a low pedestal on the second floor, and of Arnaldo Pomodoro's great bronze ball, its polished skin partially flayed, that for a time sat in the old lobby.

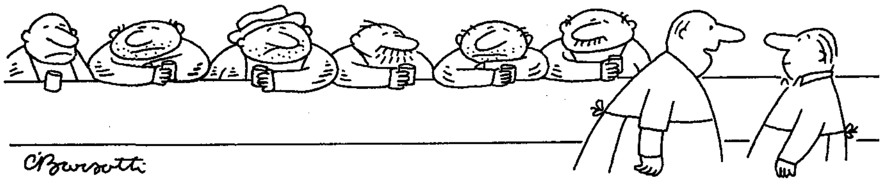
Nothing in the new building is obtrusive, nothing is cheap. It feels breathless with unspared expense. It has the enchantment of a bank after hours, of a honeycomb emptied of honey and flooded with a soft glow. My guide, William J. Maloney, the genial project director, quoted the architect as saying to the museum trustees something like this: "Raise a lot of money for me, I'll give you good architecture. Raise even more money, I'll make the architecture disappear." And disappear, in a way, it has. The customary sensations that buildings give us—of secure enclosure, of masses of matter firmly supported—are diluted by a black gap, a mere quarter inch wide, that runs along the bottom and top of every interior wall, and even at the base of weight-bearing pillars, so that everything, subtly, floats. The gaps are useful for heat and air-conditioning, too, but their aesthetic accomplishment is to dematerialize the walls; the visitor moves through spaces demarcated as if by Japanese paper screens. As he moves, artfully arranged glimpses out into the city and across a dizzying, hundred-and-ten-foot-tall atrium orient him and vary his view. Maloney spoke again for the architect: "He didn't want a box that could be anywhere. He said, 'I want the people to know they are in New York City.' " North-facing windows frame segments, like Hopper paintings, of the handsome brownstones along West Fifty-fourth Street. On the sixth floor, the top, a wide skylight provides an alarming upward perspective of Cesar Pelli's fifty-two-story residential tower, erected in 1984 on museum land to one side of the existing museum and now more or less in its center. "Can you imagine," Maloney asked, "we had to build this with that hanging over us?" He allowed that the tower's inhabitants had complained of a few jolts and shudders in the three years of construction beneath their feet. But no harm seems to have been done. Engineering miracles are an everyday occurrence in Manhattan.

The museum has expanded a number of times since its opening day, on November 8, 1929, in a rented space on the twelfth floor of the Heckscher Building, at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Fifty-seventh Street. In spite of the stock-market crash in progress, the exhibit was so well attended that the building's other tenants had to fight crowds at the elevators. The seven improvised galleries showed four painters now classified as Post-Impressionist; the Boston *Transcript* sarcastically put it, "Thursday the newly created Museum of Modern Art opened the doors of its temporary galleries and held a housewarming. The invited guests, besides the usual group of socially elect, were Cézanne, Gauguin, Seurat, and Van Gogh." The latter, in fact, attended in force—thirty-five Cézannes, twenty-six Gauguins, seventeen Seurats, and twenty-seven van Goghs. In 1932, the thriving museum moved to a five-story town house, owned by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., at 11 West Fifty-third Street, which is still its address. A boxy structure designed as a museum in the International Style by Philip L. Goodwin and Edward Durell Stone replaced it in 1939; this building was added onto in 1951, 1964, and 1984.

West Fifty-third and Fifty-fourth Streets were residential neighborhoods, with back yards and access alleys; therefore museum expansion, except for the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden, worked sideways along Fifty-third Street, and the galleries were strung along a rather narrow and inflexible route. In 1996, the Dorset Hotel (fondly remembered for its exiguous lobby and slow elevators) and several adjacent brownstones on Fifty-third and Fifty-fourth came up for sale, and



A view of the atrium, with Barnett Newman's "Broken Obelisk" and Monet's "Water Lilies." Photograph by Robert Polidori.



"In life as well as in politics, identify your base and treat 'em right."

• •

the museum acquired them, giving it a property stretching from St. Thomas Church, on Fifth Avenue, to the Museum of American Folk Art, a few doors up from Sixth Avenue. A thorough redesign was now possible, and it was entrusted to Taniguchi Associates, a Tokyo firm for whom this was the first international commission.

The inkling, in the winter of 1928-1929, shared by three well-to-do women (Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Miss Lizzie P. Bliss, and Mrs. Cornelius J. Sullivan), that New York should have a venue for the display of distinctly modern art had in seventy-five years bloomed into a cultural force able to commandeer swaths of midtown real estate and erect new buildings at a cost approaching a billion dollars. The goal for the capital campaign was set at eight hundred and fifty-eight million dollars; more than seven hundred million has already been secured, with the Board of Trustees contributing a total of more than five hundred million. The project included the acquisition, as a temporary exhibition site and a permanent storage and study facility, of the old, hundred-and-sixty-thousand-square-foot staple factory now labelled MOMA QNS. The renovations and new construction at the midtown museum alone came to four hundred and twenty-five million.

A broad, slightly sloping lobby, paved in green slate, now connects Fifty-third and Fifty-fourth Streets and provides two entrances to the museum. On the eastern side, an eight-story Education and Research Building named for Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman has arisen, and on the western side a thirteen-story tower for offices and galleries. In the middle, the lower seven floors of Pelli's tall dark tower have been incorporated into the museum. Outside on Fifty-third Street, the façades of the 1939 structure, with its piano-shaped canopy and square windows, and of the 1964 addition by Philip Johnson, whose larger, milled-steel windows have rounded corners, are refurbished and preserved—a satisfying historical touch in an urban environment not given to many such. The buildings, which endow the museum with a midtown presence to rival the Metropolitan's grand gracing of the Upper East Side, defer to their surroundings. Viewed from Fifty-third Street, through the dust and clamor of construction still in progress, the structure behind its medley of façades does not present an arresting silhouette, like Frank Lloyd Wright's top-shaped Guggenheim or Frank Gehry's titanium flourish in Bilbao. The new MOMA is not that kind of showpiece. Rather, its six stories of reticent white chambers, tucked under Pelli's overbearing gray-and-brown glass tower, melt into the cityscape and form, with their treasures, an invisible cathedral.

It used to be said that airports were our new cathedrals, the spires replaced by ascending and descending planes. But they have become workaday and shabby, cluttered with the machinery of heightened security and menaced by airline bankruptcy—bus terminals on the brink, more like refuse-littered marketplaces than like places of worship. The art museums, once haunted by a few experts, students, and idlers, have become the temples of the Ideal, of the Other, of the *something else* that, if only for a peaceful moment, redeems our daily getting and spending. Here resides something beyond our frantic animal existence. Leonardo spoke scornfully of those men who do nothing in their time on earth but produce excrement. Art, in its traditional forms of painting, drawing, and sculpture, is a human by-product whose collection, in homes, galleries, and museums, lightens the load, as it were, of life. By its glow we bask in the promise of a brighter, more lasting realm reached by a favored few—St. Vermeer, St. Pollock, St. Leonardo. In Paris and Florence, tourists from Japan come by the busful, pose giggling for a photograph in front of the "Mona Lisa" or "The Birth of Venus," and hurry on their way, blessed.

The old European museums are often converted palaces—the former residences of aristocrats whose duty to the masses was, by a curious clause in the social contract, conspicuous expenditure. So, too, their American imitations, monuments to the Mellons and the Fricks and the Havemeyers; the damask-covered walls and carved marble lintels compete, in a general outpouring of luxury, with the incalculably high-priced works on display. Everywhere, moldings, marble, fluted columns; the frames themselves are princely. But a new kind of opulence, submerged in an exquisite modesty, elaborately defers to the art itself. The seven-year-old Beyeler Museum, on the outskirts of Basel, was designed by Renzo Piano with the septuagenarian Mr. Beyeler at his elbow, urging (according to an informal talk he gave to a touring group of which I was a member) less architecture and more focus on his paintings. They are lit with the latest louvred devices and mounted in a structure of noble simplicity, its cost of more than forty million dollars reflected mostly in the fine workmanship and elegant materials. The long low building slips into the watery, suburban landscape like a sword into a green sheath. The reddish porphyry of the walls is, it gave me pleasure to notice, an echo of the local sandstone used to build the medieval Basel cathedral, now a Protestant church with cloisters and a spectacular High Gothic pulpit.

According to Russell Lynes's 1973 book, "Good Old Modern: An Intimate Portrait of the Museum of Modern Art," so-called modern art at the time of the museum's founding was ill regarded by the public. In 1921, a show of Impressionists and Post-Impressionists at the Metropolitan Museum of Art was greeted, eight years after the notorious Armory Show, with outrage verging on the apoplectic. A four-page printed protest decreed, "This 'Modernistic' degenerate cult is simply the Bolshevic philosophy applied to art," and went on to claim:

> The real cult of "Modernism" began with a small group of neurotic Ego-Maniacs in Paris who styled themselves "Satanists"—worshippers of Satan—the God of Ugliness.

The Metropolitan did not venture to show modern art soon again, helping create the vacuum that the female founders of MOMA hoped to fill: the Museum of Modern Art has been called "the Metropolitan's worst mistake." In 1929, apropos of the infant MOMA's inaugural show, Jerome Klein wrote in the Boston *Transcript*:

> For a number of years the worthy trustees of America's greatest museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, have been subjected to considerable embarrassment; a great many people have had the bad taste to inquire in the public prints why the competent administrators of the museum have taken no cognizance of the emergence of art in the world of today. . . . The clamor grew and the trustees and their henchmen awoke one day to the horrible discovery that Cézanne and his upstarts had for years been taken up by the best society.

Now even the hoi polloi accept as obvious the beauty and power of the Post-Impressionists; long lines form at their megashows, and the museum stores do a busy trade in prints, posters, shopping bags, and notepads consecrated with their imagery. Fragile-appearing, jokey modernism—its little Cubist canvases and even smaller visual witticisms by Klee, its yellowing collages and deadpan Dada stunts—grew and grew and eventually tore down the Dorset.

The new building inevitably incorporates modernism's problematical nature. When does modern art begin? Some say with Manet, and he did, with his individualized nudes in everyday settings, affront the bourgeoisie; but then so did Courbet, who nonetheless belongs to the old dispensation. The Impressionists were revolutionaries, and we still inhabit their revolution. But MOMA began with the Post-Impressionists, and they make a good starting point, around 1880. Their modernism has a theoretical, abstractifying bent and a determined individuality of style, so that no mature artist can be confused with another, as a Monet might be with a Pissarro. Though the Post-Impressionists still represent the visible world, the reproduction of natural appearances is no longer the heart of the game. We like them because, after centuries of shadowy, complicated illusionism, they used bold colors and simplified shapes. We value them for the resistance they met, and they earn our love with their suffering—van Gogh in the insane asylum, Gauguin adrift in the high seas, Seurat dying young, Cézanne plodding to the easel day after day in eremitic isolation. All of them died before their immortality was widely acknowledged.

And when will modern art end? Robert Hughes, in "The Shock of the New," muscularly argues that it died around 1970, with Andy Warhol's anomic embrace of "business art" and the passing of the concept of the avant-garde. By the seventies, a persuasive cultural permissiveness made a cutting edge impossible; suddenly, after Action painting, Pop, Op, color-field, and minimalism, art ran out of nameable movements. There was no more "modern"; there was just "contemporary." Glenn D. Lowry, MOMA's director since 1995, addresses in a thoughtful essay the museum's history and its situation—doubled attendance, proliferating collections—prior to Taniguchi's twenty-first-century expansion:

> A number of options were available, from ceasing to collect contemporary art altogether—never a serious possibility—to establishing a separate museum for contemporary art, which, however, in establishing a division between the earliest and the most recent works in the collection, would have created more problems than it solved.

The new museum's layout is open-ended, with a double-height, column-free space set aside on the reinforced second floor for contemporary art—its sheets of warped steel, its mountains of bricks or tin cans or lavender Teddy bears, its mazy installations and messy assemblages. Whatever contemporary art is not (pleasurable, say, or exquisite), it is *big*, and Taniguchi has created a giant room for it, stealing height from the floor above and providing a sliding door whereby oversized sculpture can be gantried in from the street. What is left of the third floor contains galleries for photographs, drawings, and architecture and design. The next floor up, the fourth, is intended for work, such as the large canvases of the Abstract Expressionists,

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from the postwar period to 1970, and the fifth, accessible via a grand staircase, will shelter the relatively handy works of classic modernism, from the end of the nineteenth century. The sixth floor is reserved for special exhibitions, to which escalators and elevators are expected to carry the multitudes.

The first floor will hold, besides the entry lobby and the desks for admission and membership, the commercial enterprises increasingly conspicuous among a museum's attractions, the bookstore/shop and the restaurant—restaurants, in this case, fancy in proportion to their nearness to the Sculpture Garden. Farther from it is the bar and the bar food, in a space fittingly named for the museum's first director, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Then there is, with a close view of the garden and, in season, some outdoor tables, the restaurant de résistance, bluntly called the Modern and generalled by a name chef, Gabriel Kreuther, sprung from the Ritz-Carlton on Central Park South. All eating places (and there are more, on the second and fifth floors) will be operated by Danny Meyer's Union Square Hospitality Group. The first-floor establishments will be entered by a kind of speakeasy entrance from noon until as late as eleven-thirty; one looks forward to a heist movie in which Robert De Niro and George Clooney sneak upstairs from their 11 P.M. espresso and brandy to appropriate some Picassos and Brancusis. And, oh yes—the Sculpture Garden, wider and longer, has been born again with new young trees to replace the birches and beeches that had been getting too shaggy anyway.

The cathedral stands ready for the faithful. Here they come: the slow-footed tourists, foreign and domestic; the suburban adventuresses in for lunch; the Brearley seniors with their spiral-bound sketchbooks and their flaxen tresses; the semi-unshaven East Village youth, two years out of Podunk, looking for an art fix even if it means sitting through Andy Warhol's static epic "Empire." A few pilgrims, perhaps, will turn back from the counter when they are told that the admission fee is twenty dollars and a mere twelve and sixteen, respectively, for students and sixty-five-and-overs who have the I.D.s to prove it. But a balcony seat at a failing Broadway musical costs three times that, and MOMA floor space has been increased by almost half again, from eighty-five thousand square feet to a hundred and twenty-five thousand.

Is more truly more? MOMA, which I first visited in the late nineteen-forties, was a relatively intimate collection of human-scale works in non-palatial rooms. Picasso's "Guernica," on loan to keep it away from Franco, and Rousseau's "Sleeping Gypsy" were the biggest canvases in sight; Baziotes, Dubuffet, and Peter Blume were the latest things on the walls. You could hustle through it in an hour or two, on a one-way route. With the expansion of 1964, which added the great Picasso-Matisse room, some choices for ambulation were offered; but it was still, on the second floor, a single experience. Now four floors, plus soundproof galleries for video and media, beckon from all sides. One of the charms of a museum for modern art was that there wasn't too much of it, just as a lifetime of history wasn't too much. After seventy-five years, a life is a stretch and the cathedral may have too many chapels. "*Nous verrons*," as Cézanne might remark, squinting toward Mont Sainte-Victoire. We shall see. ♦

THE SKY LINE

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Yoshio Taniguchi's elegant expansion of the Modern.

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

The first building that the Museum of Modern Art put up for itself, in 1939, wasn't sumptuous, like the Met, or extravagantly sculptural, like the Guggenheim, two decades later. It was a crisp, blunt box. Philip L. Goodwin and Edward Durell Stone's International Style architecture was defiantly austere—a retort to the idea that museums should resemble grandiose palaces. The white marble building burst out of a row of genteel brownstones on West Fifty-third Street, forcing its way into the Manhattan cityscape. It was a matter of pride that the new building looked nothing like its neighbors.

The museum's idiosyncratic appearance was always a bit of a pose, however. Though the building's original design emphasized its difference from the old architecture around it, the ultimate goal of the Modern's curators was to make all the old stuff go away. In 1951, a new wing by Philip Johnson was built along the museum's western edge, and in 1964 another, larger Johnson addition appeared on its eastern flank. The Modern grew again in 1984, with a new section by Cesar Pelli, who also designed a companion fifty-two-story apartment tower. And with the opening, this month, of the largest expansion yet, a four-hundred-and-twenty-five-million-dollar addition and renovation by the Japanese architect Yoshio Taniguchi, the Modern has pretty much taken over the block. The museum stretches along Fifty-third Street from just west of Fifth Avenue to just short of Sixth, and it reaches north to cover most of Fifty-fourth Street, too. You couldn't ask for a clearer symbol of how modernism has moved from the cultural fringe to the mainstream. Not only has it been years since the art at the Modern has challenged anyone—its Matisses and Pollocks are beloved by all—but Taniguchi's strict geometries of stone and glass feel as conventional as a Doric colonnade.

When the Goodwin and Stone building opened, Lewis Mumford wrote that "it possesses, to a degree not dreamed of even by the designers of Rockefeller Center, the luxury of space." But it wasn't particularly big; it was barely larger than the neighboring brownstones. Arthur Drexler, who headed the architecture-and-design department for decades, liked to observe that until the 1984 expansion you could fit the entire Museum of Modern Art into the Great Hall of the Met. The Modern didn't have any enormous galleries, and most of its exhibition spaces were domestic in scale. In fact, the affection that many people felt for the museum was formed by the experience of seeing paintings in fairly small, low-ceilinged white rooms.

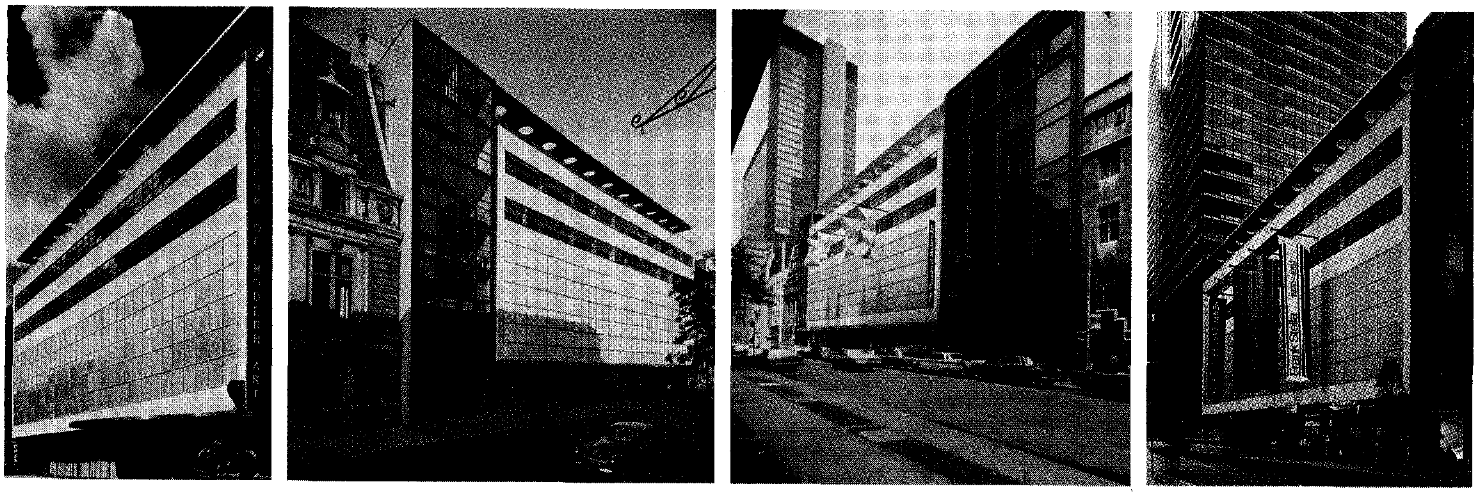
The 1984 expansion was an attempt to make the museum bigger without changing its basic qualities, and it didn't work very well. The galleries got somewhat larger and there were many more of them, this time connected by a prominent set of escalators—yet the place felt unnaturally attenuated, like a stretch limousine. The general feeling about the expansion was summed up by Kirk Varnedoe, the chief curator of painting and sculpture, who said, "We squeezed the last juice you could get out of that model and maybe killed it in the process." In 1996, when Varnedoe made that remark, it was clear that if the Modern was to grow again it would have to break from small, white rooms and neutral, International Style architecture. Ronald Lauder, the museum's chairman, reinforced this idea, saying that, as far as the trustees were concerned, the architecture should be "as exciting as possible."

That isn't what happened. The Modern talked to dozens of architects, including Rem Koolhaas, Bernard Tschumi, Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, and Steven Holl, as well as Taniguchi, and it commissioned casual studies from ten architects and then more detailed plans from three. In 1997, the museum snubbed the radicals and hired Taniguchi, who represents not the cutting edge of architecture but, rather, a carefully wrought, highly refined modernism—a cool and reserved aesthetic that has more in common with the Modern's original credo than with the expressive direction of recent architecture and museum design.

The decision, I suspect, was based in part on disappointment with the avant-garde architects' proposals but mostly on the realization that the Modern is fundamentally a conservative institution. The choice of Taniguchi wasn't so much a failure of nerve as a moment of institutional self-knowledge. This museum wouldn't have wanted Bilbao if Frank Gehry had done it for nothing. The Modern has supported, collected, and celebrated architectural design more than any other museum in America, but it has never allowed its identity to be defined by any architecture of its own. It is one thing to display Frank Lloyd Wright models inside your galleries; it is quite another to have Rem Koolhaas design your building. The Modern chose Taniguchi, a sixty-seven-year-old architect who was educated at Harvard but has done almost all of his professional work in Japan, because it thought that he could best preserve the museum's DNA.

That doesn't explain why Taniguchi's new Modern is as good as it is. Taniguchi clearly understood a paradox that underscores this project—that his success at keeping the museum the same would come, in part, from his ability to recognize how much had to change. His Modern was going to be nearly twice the size of the previous one, and he knew better than to simply distend the old spaces. With its sleek glass walls and sharp, rectilinear lines, Taniguchi's huge building superficially resembles the Modern of old, but in many ways it represents a greater change than the oddly shaped buildings proposed by some architects the museum considered, like Herzog and de Meuron, who suggested adding a prismatic glass tower, but would have left the museum's most celebrated paintings in the old Goodwin and Stone galleries.

Although Taniguchi has created some superb display spaces, his design is most splendid, and subtle, in its urbanism. Until now, the Modern has had an unresolved, almost hesitant relationship with midtown Manhattan. When the benign tension between the 1939 building and the old houses disappeared, nothing replaced it. The museum didn't feel connected to the city, except in the sculpture garden. When the Modern bought and demolished the Dorset Hotel, on Fifty-fourth Street, along with numerous small brownstones, its site grew not only bigger but also more complex, and Taniguchi saw this as a chance to weave the building into the fabric of the city. He gave it a new entrance, on Fifty-fourth Street, and he provided a public passageway through the block to Fifty-third Street, a huge lobby that anyone can use as a shortcut through a busy section of midtown. The museum now faces both streets, and it has finally become part of the connective tissue of Manhattan. The old Modern occupied the street in sullen isolation; this one dances with its neighbors. Taniguchi even sliced away a bit of his building in the southeast corner of the garden, where it might have blocked a portion of St. Thomas Church, which adjoins the museum to the east. On the inside, he has set skylights on the top floor, right against



The Modern in its various guises. From left to right: the 1939 original; the 1951 wing; the 1964 addition; the 1984 expansion and companion apartment tower.

COURTESY MOMA (1-3); ART RESOURCE (4)

the base of Pelli's tower, creating dazzling views right up its side toward the sky.

Taniguchi's façade of absolute black granite, aluminum panels, and white and gray glass is elegantly restrained. It proves that you can ensconce a building within a kind of classic modern tradition and still imbue it with freshness. And the design works on a large scale—so well that Pelli's apartment tower, which always seemed too big, now feels like a natural part of a composition. It is balanced by a new, smaller tower at the west end of the site, which houses the museum's offices, and by two monumental, portico-like gateways at the east and west ends of the sculpture garden. Those porticoes, which resemble gigantic bookends, frame the garden from inside the building, and from the outside they ennoble the transition between the garden and the museum. The sculpture garden has been restored to its original Philip Johnson design (Pelli encroached on it with a greenhouselike structure containing escalators), but the new surroundings that Taniguchi has made for it give the garden a greater intensity.

The interior is a little less reserved than the outside, but not much. The new lobby offers glimpses up to a six-story skylit atrium that cuts through the new gallery floors, Taniguchi's acknowledgment that a building this big needs vertical as well as horizontal space. The atrium contains precisely positioned openings, projections, balconies, and overlooks; it is a pristine exercise in proportion, scale, and light, not the kind of razzle-dazzle hotel architecture that the word "atrium" calls to mind.

Once inside the museum, visitors follow a sequence that is quite different from that of the old Modern: contemporary art is shown mainly in a set of large, double-height galleries on the second floor, and you move backward in time as you rise through the building and the ceilings get lower. The famous paintings that once hung on the second floor are now on the fifth, in rooms that are only slightly larger than the old ones. At the top of the gallery wing, on the sixth floor, are grand, loftlike galleries for temporary exhibitions.

The main difference is that there is no longer a single sequence of movement, as there famously was at the Modern: one route through obsessively linear galleries that presented the history of art as a straight shot from Cézanne to Picasso to Matisse. The Modern's singular view of art history came, over time, to take on the stature of myth, and these days politically correct critics call it into question, but the fact is that the gallery scheme was as much a result of physical limitations as of curators' sensibilities. In the narrow confines of the old Modern, there wasn't really room to arrange things any other way. Now, though, the building is vast, and its galleries aren't episodes in a narrative but hyperlinks, offering connections in multiple directions. Terence Riley, the head of the museum's department of architecture and design, refers to the layout as resembling the child's game Chutes and Ladders—you can move straight through, or you can slip down a stairway or up an escalator and find yourself in an entirely different moment in the history of art. This approach is more liberating than confusing, because the basic order of the building is always apparent; this museum is not a structure that, like the Met, rambles so much that you get lost in it.

Some of the most pleasant aspects of the design are in the details: a magnificent cantilevered staircase of wood and metal between the fourth and fifth floors is an expert homage to Mies van der Rohe. Taniguchi makes a complex array of balconies, bridges, porticoes, stairs, openings, vistas, and passageways seem serene rather than hyperactive. The building won't feel busy enough for people weaned on the non-stop stimulation of a lot of today's architecture, and it won't feel modest enough for people who insist that God meant the Museum of Modern Art to be small. But I suspect that it will please almost everybody else.

The architect has also restored the façade of the original Goodwin and Stone building, whose Thermolux translucent panels were covered up long ago to provide more hanging space. The restoration is exquisite, and it is both uplifting and saddening. The old building looks better than it has in half a century, both inside and out. But it has been spiffed up like a grande dame who has been dressed to be put on display at her grandchild's party. When you look at the old building from Fifty-third Street, it seems almost embalmed—a beautiful relic trapped inside a sprawling temple. ♦

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I Am Charlotte Simmons, *by Tom Wolfe (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $28.95).* Not since the days of the manifesto-happy Surrealists has a writer declared his intention to dazzle with such hip-waggling brio as Tom Wolfe. In the sixties, he advertised a "New Journalism," full of narrative punch and "status detail." (Shades from Defoe to Liebling were curious to learn of these new developments.) Then, in 1989, Wolfe wrote an essay that called for a rambunctious, muscular new "social novel" to embrace the carnival of American life. By now it's plain that Wolfe's fiction, while often featuring hilarious set-pieces of social embarrassment and lubricious yearning, is no match for the best of his journalism, which is still as fizzy as when it was first uncorked. The latest novel, his third, is the weakest—saddled with the familiar leering terminology ("loamy loins," "stiffened giblet") but containing no news more startling than that college students are erotically overheated and intellectually distracted. When Wolfe's reporting is dated, his fiction, for all its energy, seems stalled—an engine roaring in park.

Astonishing Splashes of Colour, *by Clare Morrall (HarperCollins; $23.95).* This début novel is narrated by Kitty, a childlike woman who lives next door to her husband, rides in circles for hours on the city bus, and sees the world as a kaleidoscope of vivid colors. She is obsessed by the loss of the mother and sister she never knew, and of the baby she miscarried. Morrall deftly charts how Kitty's harmless eccentricity turns to sinister fixation as she loiters outside elementary schools, suffers disconcerting lapses of memory, and sinks deeper into despair. Some rather hackneyed plot twists notwithstanding, Kitty's voice, by turns bewildered, selfish, and angry, and leavened by a dry wit, carries the book; she observes of her elder brother, a pompous novelist who ignored her as a child, "He'll regret it one day, when his biographer interviews me about his early life. I shall be entirely truthful."

Wodehouse, *by Robert McCrum (Norton; $27.95).* "His characters have never tasted the forbidden fruit" was Evelyn Waugh's assessment of P. G. Wodehouse, and, by all accounts, Wodehouse was the most undersexed and sweet-tempered of men, a stranger to the drunkenness and philandering that often enliven the biographies of English men of letters. McCrum tells the story judiciously, though he dithers around certain mysteries, such as the entanglements of Wodehouse's wife with various louche men. The dramatic center of the book is, quite properly, the broadcasts Wodehouse made on Nazi radio during the Second World War. McCrum shows how Wodehouse was bamboozled into making those broadcasts, and why he never quite understood the "global howl" they provoked. In his view, after all, he was showing British sang-froid in the face of dire circs. Total war and the creator of Blandings Castle were simply not cut out for each other.

Bicycle, *by David V. Herlihy (Yale; $35).* The bicycle began life, in the nineteenth century, as a diversion for rich Europeans. Physicians, theologians, anti-feminists, and journalists condemned it as a hazardous fad—"Man is a locomotive machine of Nature's own making, not to be improved by the addition of any cranks or wheels of mortal invention," wrote one opponent—and cyclists were sometimes set upon by mobs. By the century's end, however, with a safe, efficient model available to the commuter and the Sunday pleasure seeker, the bicycle created thousands of jobs, spurred road construction, and transformed fashion, while daredevil, brandy-swilling racing cyclists acquired heroic status. Herlihy portrays the men who pioneered this gravity-defying wonder; they worked in near-obscurity, lit by the Industrial Age's spirit of invention, the capitalist impulse, and the utopian hope that the bicycle would "take men away from the gambling rooms and rum shops, out into God's light and sunshine."

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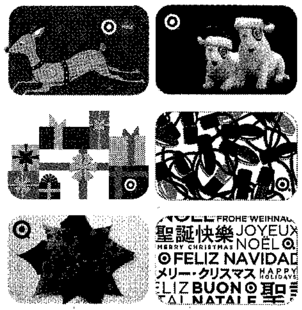

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ON TELEVISION

BLUE BLOOD

Who knew what when.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

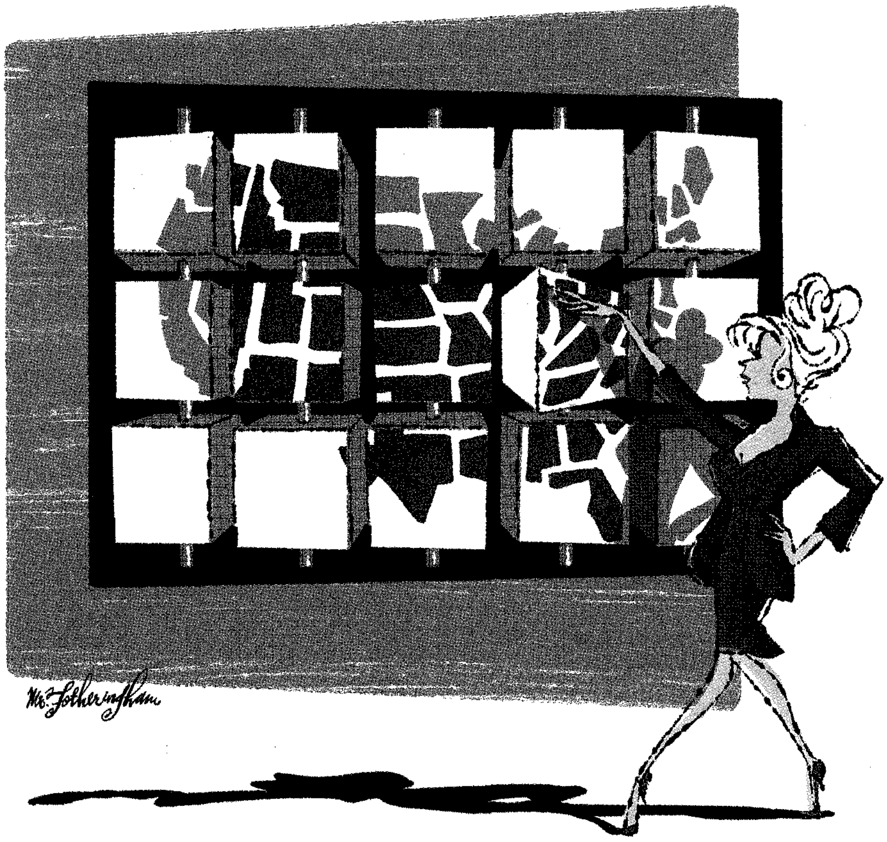
Though there has not yet been a poll to prove the validity of this claim, it's probably fair to say that most Americans will not be glad to hear that the 2008 campaign started on Wednesday, November 3rd. The night before, even while there was still—maybe, possibly, can't tell, could be—a chance that John Kerry would defeat President Bush, television broadcasters were bandying about Hillary Clinton and Bill Frist as likely performers in the next red-and-blue circus, and on Wednesday afternoon the Fox News anchor Shepard Smith leered at the camera and said that there were "only fourteen hundred and sixty-two days until 'You Decide '08.' " Fear not, though; it appears that those days will not be filled with political coverage alone—at around the same time that Smith was licking his chops, Lester Holt, over on MSNBC, was serving up the traditional cable-news turkey dinner, providing an update on the Scott Peterson murder trial in California.

By the night before the election, fatigue was showing in various forms on our TV screens. Peter Jennings, during his evening news program, referred to the "Terry campaign," and, on NBC, Tim Russert said to Tom Brokaw, "Democrats and Republicans admit, if the turnout hits a hundred and twenty million dollars—a hundred and twenty million *people*—that is very good news for John Kerry." (Brokaw, who, covering his last Presidential race before retiring next month, was beginning a marathon of nearly twelve hours on the air, was still fresh enough to have a little droll fun with the slip: "A hundred and twenty million dollars won't even buy you a good election this time.") On CNN, a conservative radio talk-show host named Michael Smerconish, called on by Anderson Cooper to respond to a segment with Michael Moore, said that Moore was "motivated by hatriol."

Anyone who had been watching TV in the weeks preceding the election was suffering from fatigue, too, as well as frustration. While thousands of people throughout the country were energized as never before to give their time to help people register to vote, man phone banks, get voters to the polls on Election Day, television itself was busy wearying viewers with endless citing of polls, reporting every tiny blip of a rise or fall by each candidate, and doing so with increasing frequency after the first debate, when Kerry got a noteworthy boost and showed that he just might be the good closer so many election-watchers claimed him to be. Rarely was there a poll whose margin of error allowed for any conclusions to be drawn, and so the partisan pundits rushed into the informational vacuum, where they remained right up through the afternoon of Election Day. On the vaudeville act known as "Crossfire," Paul Begala, James Carville, Robert Novak, and Tucker Carlson, perhaps high from too much Halloween candy, were alternately shouting at and over one another. The night before, on Greta Van Susteren's Fox News show, the women's unit of the Fighting Windbags was engaged in split-screen combat. While Laura Ingraham was going on about how "when people go into the voting booth tomorrow, they're aligning themselves, if they support Kerry, with the people of France, with China," Susan Estrich was saying, "Oh, Laura. Enough already. Can you stop?" When she said, "What Laura's doing right now is really very, very destructive," Ingraham interrupted with a disgusted, "Ah, please," and then Estrich made her final plea for Ingraham to stop trafficking in "this kind of garbage that you've been spilling for months." "Bouillon de Culture" it was not.

The next day, long before any voting numbers came in, everyone was trying to find different ways to say "too close to call," and both sides were saying that the key to their success would be voter turnout. Lester Holt said to Andrea Mitchell that when people asked him what the network knew he told them, "We'll know when we know." The banner at the bottom of the screen on CNN at four-thirty said "WHEN WILL WE KNOW?" An hour and a half later, Judy Woodruff said, "The watchword is caution," and "We would much rather get it right than get it first." (Among the featured guests announced in the introduction to "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart" later that night were the Too Close to Call Dancers.) The caution in evidence on TV didn't, at least for a while, make for agonizing viewing for Democrats, because, by midday on Election Day, word had spread, albeit before any spreading of any word could mean anything, that Kerry was doing well. So for them it was just a matter of patiently waiting it out. The television news organizations, having burned themselves in the 2000 election by calling Florida too early, and calling it wrong, all bent over backward to hold off on projecting outcomes. There would be no "DEWEY DEFEATS TRUMAN" banner on any of their screens. But as time went on Kerry's momentum proved to be a phantom. Never at any point was he ahead in the electoral-vote count, and in other races around the country Democrats were losing in convincing numbers.

The "news" that gave Kerry voters hope on Tuesday afternoon had been provided not by television anchors but by Internet bloggers who had gained access to the first wave of exit polls and then triggered a flurry of phone-calling and e-mailing. Suddenly, we all thought we knew what we were talking about, even though the bloggers urged readers not to rely on what "a little birdie told us," as Wonkette put it. Campaign officials, some of the networks reported, were infected by this information, too, and were trying to nudge the networks into chatting up their side. But polls—the preëlection polls, the early exit polls, and the later exit polls—first undid expectations of all sorts (and also undid, briefly, the stock market), and then led to the instant promulgation of what were touted as new certainties. But it turned out that the country had been poll-axed. Young voters had in no way affected the election's outcome. Women voters were apparently overcounted in exit polls, and white male voters were undercounted. And preëlection polls didn't get right the number of Hispanic voters who were going to go for Bush.



The Republican Party rides high on the wheel of fortune.

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

The day after the election, the most widely cited exit poll was the one showing that "moral values" were the most important concern for twenty-two per cent of voters. Within no time, this news became the Statistic Most Likely to Be Repeated Constantly in the next four years, and, just as quickly, the news pundits began flagellating themselves for not getting it (though the news that sixty-one per cent of regular churchgoers favored Bush was known, and had been cited, before the election), and wringing their hands over what was seen as a "wake-up call" and a "spiritual crisis" for the Democratic Party, which would force some "soul-searching." Only a few people, such as Andrew Kohut, the director of the Pew Research Center, who appeared on "The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer," pointed out that you could conclude just as much from the way the moral-values question had been asked as you could from the response; many people, when presented with that answer on a list of choices, are likely to choose it, because it has a "social desirability factor," but he noted that during the campaign, when people were asked open-ended questions about their concerns, moral values were not at the top of their list. Once again, TV viewers were pounded with the notion, as Tim Russert put it on Wednesday, that, "particularly in those so-called red states," people identify with Bush's "jeans," his "belt buckle," and his "swagger." (Jeans, O.K. Belt buckle, maybe. What remains a mystery is the magnetism of a person who carries himself as though he were holding an invisible porcupine under each armpit.) The journalist Christopher Hitchens, interviewed by BBC World News on the cultural-values issue, spit nails of contempt in Kerry's direction: "What did he think he looked like, posing as a duck hunter?" In Wednesday's coverage, the deconstruction of Kerry's Grey Poupon-colored barn jacket was given its due, as was, to be sure, the enormous import of Bush's victory and his historic fifty-nine million votes, but something was missing from the conversation. It was as if commentators, in focussing on polling issues, the Big Red Machine, and those vaunted values, were trying to set their own on-air agenda for the next four years—renewing their own contracts, as it were. Early indications, as we relearned last week, can be deceiving, but so far that agenda doesn't appear to include very much talk about the concerns and the values of the fifty-five million people who voted for John Kerry. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

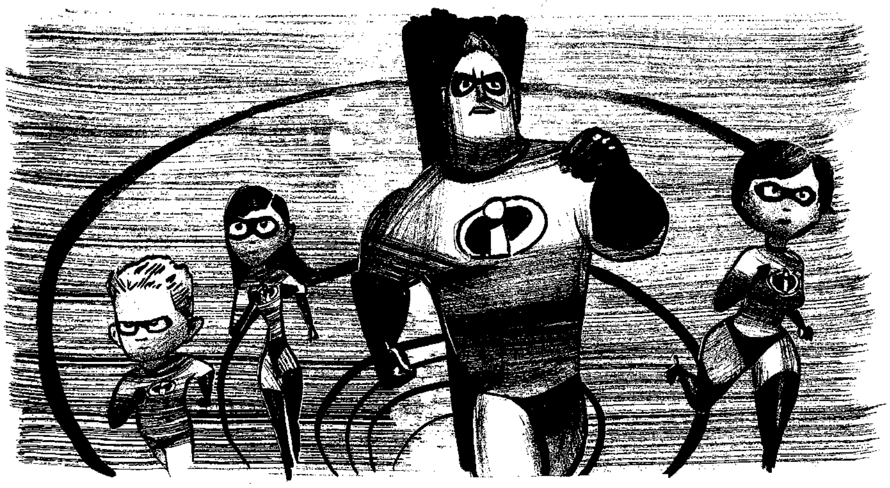
ILLUSTRATED LIFE

"The Incredibles" and "The Big Red One."

BY ANTHONY LANE

Meet Bob, Helen, Violet the teenage grump, her younger brother Dash, and baby Jack Jack. These are the Parrs, their very name redolent of the decently average. They are the stars of "The Incredibles," the latest offering from Pixar, which remains, at the time of writing, part of Disney. (A family that's far less functional than the Parrs, by the way.) Unlike Pixar's "Finding Nemo," that backward blend of the scaly and the sentimental, the new movie, written and directed by Brad Bird, shares with the studio's "Toy Story" and "Monsters, Inc." a sprightly central conceit. Years ago, Bob and Helen Parr were superheroes—Mr. Incredible and Elastigirl. He was mostly knuckles and chin, whereas she was as limber as it is possible to be without consulting the Kama Sutra. Together, they competed to punish villainy, although, even then, you sensed that their supremacy might fade—hence the beautiful, end-of-day shot of Elastigirl cartwheeling away over the rooftops, her legs stretching like gum as she loops out of sight. Jump forward fifteen years and the pair of crimefighters are happier, because they are married with children, but sadder, because they are surplus to civic requirements. Anti-hero litigation raised its head, the cops now handle crime, and, by government decree, Bob and Helen are forbidden to exercise their powers outside the home. He works in insurance, she raises the kids. So, how can they stay super?

As you might guess, there is a call to arms. A silvery seductress named Mirage summons Bob from retirement and flies him to a tropical isle, otherwise known as a trap. None of this is vouchsafed to Helen, who stays home in the blithe belief that Bob has been given a raise and a chance to take business trips. When the truth hits, she sets off on a dual mission to rescue and berate her lump of a husband, with the two older children stowing away for the ride. From here, we are treated to a flurry of inch-narrow escapes and explosions of gratifying flamboyance. What makes "The Incredibles" work, however, is not the velocity of the plotting, or the latest improvements in animation—these are so regularly cried up, with every Pixar release, that we greet them with yawns of contented acceptance—but the more prosaic fact that the folks at the movie's heart are exaggerated way beyond our capacities but not quite beyond our imaginings. The title is unjust; these are the very slightly credibles.



The Incredible family: freaks, but the right kind of freaks.

TOM BACHTELL

Bob, for example, is the drone who dreams of higher things. Why else would he and his friend Lucius spend an evening sitting in a parked car, tuning in to police frequencies and listening for the sort of misdemeanors to which, in the old days, they might have put a halt? As for Helen, she builds into a bundle of housewifely frustration. Her offspring, likewise, may be freaks, but they are the right kind of freaks—Violet can vanish at will and grow an unbreakable force field around her person, which is pretty much what most girls in their early teens would pray for, while Dash, true to his name, wants to run and run. Only the baddie, the excitingly named Syndrome, disappoints; he's nothing but a megalomaniac, when what we need here is minimanias—the fuzz and snag of ordinary feelings.

Nowhere do those feelings breed faster than in Bob's insurance office: as bare and off-white as the inside of a new fridge, hushed but for the tapping of pencils and the sighs of claimants. The layout, in which our hero's head pokes above an array of cubicled workspaces, was plainly pinched from "The Apartment," in which Jack Lemmon, too, was swallowed by the bureaucratic rat-run. Billy Wilder nailed the sensations of office life once and for all in that film, and Brad Bird is right to pay homage. He has bothered to think through the impact of his outlandish designs, whereas one of the depressing things about a big summer hit like "Shrek 2" was that it nodded at other recent movies, and commercial fads, purely on the ground that they *were* recent and would thus grab a temporary laugh. The "Shrek" pictures, like "Shark Tale," will date fast, eaten by the rust of their own cynicism, while "The Incredibles," silly as it is, retains just enough innocence to suggest that it might hang around.

Not that we should jack the film up to a plane where it doesn't belong; there is no moral sophistication here that can keep pace with the technical variety, largely because that technique itself—at Pixar, at DreamWorks animation, and in the hands of every director who is tempted to tamper digitally with live actors—is, by definition, unable to cope with spontaneity. The camera no longer catches a gesture, or a play of expression, on the wing; someone has to create a program for it and patch it into place. That is why Brad Bird and his team were wise not to attempt physically authentic humans. From "Toy Story" onward, it was evident that computer animation was itself a shiny new toy, perfect for plastic cowboys and space rangers but hopeless at *Homo sapiens*. When I first heard about "The Incredibles," I dreaded the prospect of a hero who would, like every other digital man so far, resemble one of Barbie's boyfriends. Imagine my relief when Bob, Helen, and the kids, for all the nicety of their emotions, turned out to be—if I can risk a word that may be taboo in Pixar land—cartoons. Long may it stay that way.

It is twenty-four years since "The Big Red One" was released, although to fans of the director, Samuel Fuller, a more fitting title would be "The Small Mangled One." As with any movie from which chunks were sawed off, rumors—upgraded to myths—have circulated of an unflawed original. And lo, it comes. After much sleuthing and jigsaw work, headed by the film critic Richard Schickel, we get the finished article, forty-five minutes longer than the amputated version that we saw back in 1980. This is a major addition to the canon if you happen to believe, as many film buffs do, that Fuller, who died in 1997, is a hero among directors. "The Big Red One" was his grand finale, cherished in his mind for many years: the crowning of the violent, unembarrassable manner which he had refined since the nineteen-fifties, in such films as "Pickup on South Street" and "The Naked Kiss." His eye was as much flashbulb as camera, scanning a low-lit world for a kind of dirty, tabloid poetry; he was the Weegee of cinema.

"The Big Red One" has lost none of its doggedness. We still follow the slog of Sergeant Possum (Lee Marvin) and four of his men (Mark Hamill, Robert Carradine, Bobby Di Cicco, and Kelly Ward), members of the 1st Infantry Division, from the shores of North Africa (where American troops capture a strip of beach from a detachment of Vichy French), to Sicily, to Omaha Beach on D Day, and, at last, to a concentration camp in Czechoslovakia. Much of this is founded on Fuller's own combat experience, although just because something is true does not automatically mean that it will strike us as real; indeed, there is a faintly fantastical air to the hermetic world of our five heroes, who survive each campaign not only intact but barely scraped by the presence of other troops, let alone by officers. In part, this was a question of budget, with Fuller lacking the funds for the movie he'd dreamed of, and you could argue that he made the best of a squashed job, ramming home his vision of a war conducted not by bands of brothers but by a gang of freelancers, shackled to themselves for want of a chain of command. The trouble with this defense is that we don't turn to Fuller for character sketches—he relished the screwed-up and the beaten-up, but nobody milder—and that, after two and a half hours, we still have only the flimsiest grasp of Possum's underlings. There is a famously wacky sequence, reeking of Joseph Heller, in which the men help to deliver a baby inside a tank on a blasted battlefield, but for me it was spoiled by Possum's surprised reaction when one of his men claims to have medical training. I thought, This comes out *now*? After two years of fighting side by side?

Such quibbling will not trouble Fuller's advocates, who warm to him less for his subtlety than for his abrasive energies, the speed with which people in his pictures are knocked sideways into terror and psychosis—wait for the guy who loses a testicle, which Possum finds and tosses away like a peach stone—and his administering of lyrical shock. (Years before "Reservoir Dogs" toyed with ear-slicing, "The Big Red One" introduced us to that delightful sport.) It may sound ungrateful, after the reconstructors' majestic efforts, to admit to disappointment, but there is something about the plastic lighting and the swooping zooms of "The Big Red One," plus its kitschy grabs at the surreal—the scene in a lunatic asylum, where German troops are billeted, manages to be at once implausible and offensive—that blocks any close engagement with the drama. That said, you must see this film for one unstoppable reason, and that is Lee Marvin. He is its cold core, believably weathered by years of attrition. A single closeup of those eyes is not just a calmative to his jittery subordinates but an ice-blue rebuke to the more rackety aggression of the man behind the camera. As for the morality of war, Marvin has it sewn up: "We don't murder. We kill." ♦

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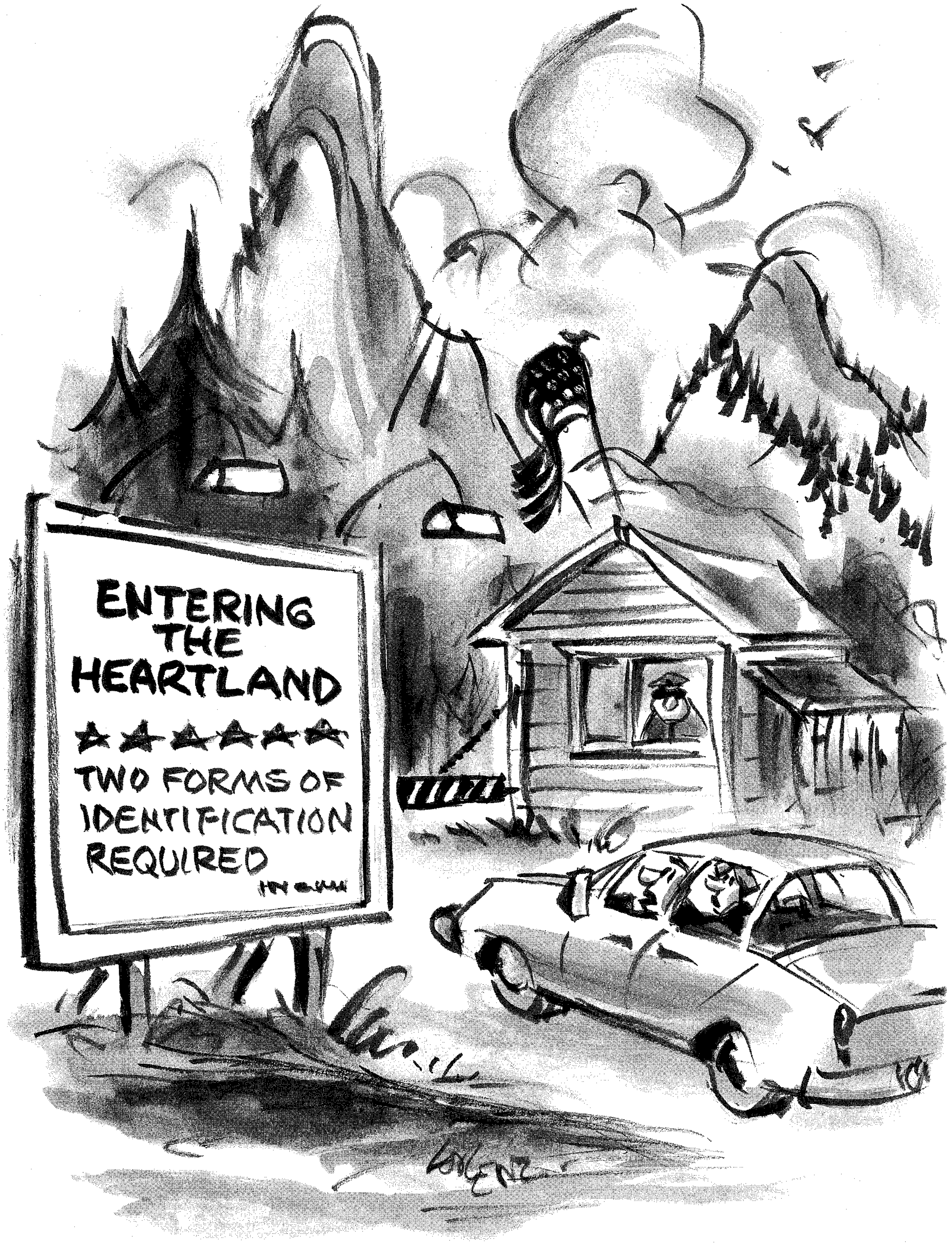
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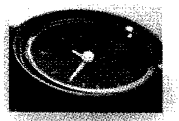

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